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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE JEWISH SOUL AND THE THEORY OF POSITIVE DISINTEGRATION

by

DIANA ROSEN

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

IN

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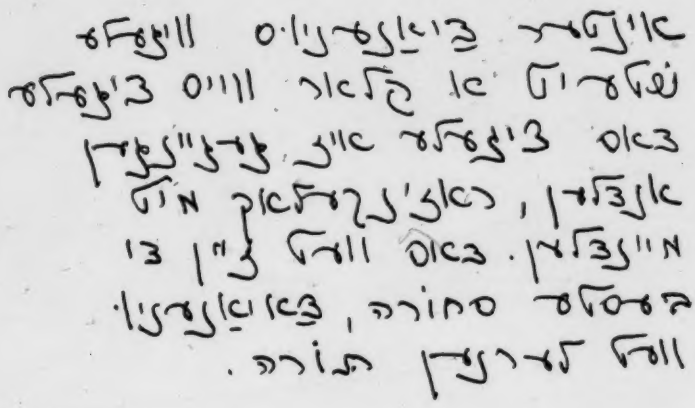
Date April 22/1983

This thesis is dedicated

to my mother and her lullaby



TRANSLATION: Under Diana's little carriage,

Stands a pure white goat,

The little goat went shopping,

And bought her sweet raisins and almonds,

But the best gift he could offer Diana

Would be to learn the Torah.

ABSTRACT

This study illustrated principles of Dr. Kazimierz Dabrowski's theory of Positive Disintegration through an examination of the development of major characters in three of Chaim Potok's books: The Chosen, My Name is Asher Lev and In the Beginning.

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INTRODUCTION

> All beginnings are hard ... Especially a beginning that you make by yourself. That's the hardest beginning of all.
>
> (In the Beginning, p. 9-10)

The process of Positive Disintegration is directed towards making a new beginning in life. Its purpose and result is to become a human being with "personality," a human being that is self-chosen, self-determined and self-affirmed. I wanted to be that kind of person.

I first became acquainted with Dr. Dabrowski and his theory through a friend of mine. At that time in my life I was experiencing a considerable amount of conflict, inner tension and anxiety. I was attracted to the theory of Positive Disintegration because it helped give me some perspective on my situation, and it also made me feel hopeful: not only were my pain and anguish positive, but they were absolutely essential to my evolvement as a human being. I was very excited about this concept and decided to contact Dr. Dabrowski.

He impressed me with his warmth and sensitivity. I felt he really cared about human beings. He made me feel unique and worthwhile and assured me that my painful experiences were important and instrumental to my personal transformation. Together we explored ways that I could reduce my anxiety and channel it creatively. He was a true inspiration to me.

When Dr. Dabrowski discovered that I was Jewish this seemed to

be of particular significance to him. I told him that my parents were survivors of the Holocaust and we discussed the pain and atrocity of the war.

An experience I fondly remember is a Yiddish lullaby I once sang to him. My mother used to sing it to me as a child. He loved it and seemed deeply moved by the experience.

One day as I was walking down a corridor in the Biological Sciences building at the University of Alberta, he saw me and beckoned me to come into his office. After we were both comfortably seated, he closed his eyes and asked me to sing him the lullaby. I sang it to him over and over again as he gently wept. This lullaby has always been a great source of comfort and nourishment for me. I hope I was able to give Dabrowski this same expression of love.

Through another friend I was introduced to a book called My Name is Asher Lev, written by Chaim Potok. It had great impact on me. It opened a door inside me that had been shut for years. This door was connected to my Jewishness. I did not feel good about being Jewish. My earliest recollection dealing with this issue was lying in bed at the age of six suddenly realizing that I was Jewish. At the same time I felt a heavy, dark, porous mass descend upon me and envelop me. I was very frightened. Being Jewish felt like a heavy burden for me. This feeling of darkness, pain and suffering continued to fester inside me for years. I tried to hide it or at least diminish its importance in my life, but it manifested in many different ways: free-floating

anxiety, fear and dread, a deep sense of guilt and psychosomatic symptoms.

As a result of reading Chaim Potok's books, I experienced a "positive disintegration" in this area of my life and I am now proud and happy to be Jewish. I feel whole and restored unto myself. As Franz Kafka so aptly phrased it: "A book must be an ice-axe to break the sea frozen inside us." This is what Potok's books did for me.

As I began to read the rest of Potok's novels I began to perceive that here was a man who had probably never been exposed to Dabrowski's theory writing about children that displayed characteristics of "psychoneurosis"; children who crossed the boundaries of their traditional upbringing, to forge ahead into unknown territories. Here were human beings demonstrating their unique gifts and talents, striving towards concrete personality ideals grounded in high level universal values and authenticity. This was a very exciting observation for me and since Dabrowski's theory was close to my heart and Potok's characters were an excellent illustration of aspects of his theory I decided to meld the two together.

My purpose in writing this thesis is to substantiate Dabrowski's theory of Positive Disintegration with an illustration of the development of major characters in three of Chaim Potok's books: The Chosen (1967), My Name is Asher Lev (1972), and In the Beginning (1975).

The following is a brief overview of the chapters as they appear in this thesis:

Chapter I: a synopsis of each book and sketches of the major characters; an examination of common themes in each book, and a short biographical note about the author.

Chapter II: an examination of Dabrowski's theory of Positive Disintegration with a focus on the notions of transcendence and transformation.

Chapter III: conversations with Marlene Rankel, an expert in Dabrowski's theory highlighting the finer points of his theory as they relate to Chaim Potok's three books.

Reflections: a concluding statement reflecting my personal process in writing this thesis.

Appendices:

- Appendix A: Glossary of Hebrew Terms used throughout the thesis.
- Appendix B: A Theoretical Pattern of The Distribution of Dynamisms at Each Level of Development.

CHAPTER I

SYNOPSES AND CHARACTER SKETCHES

INTRODUCTION

Although I include biographical material on the characters in the synopses of the books and character sketches, my primary intention is to capture the essence of each story and the "soul" of the characters in Potok's books for the uninitiated reader.

This chapter will begin with a summary of The Chosen, and its main character Danny Saunders, and then continue with My Name is Asher Lev, and an examination of the characters of Asher, Rivkeh and Aryeh Lev. The last book to be discussed will be In the Beginning with a look at the characters of David and Max Lurie.

This will be followed by an examination of the themes common to each book and a short biographical note on Chaim Potok.

THE CHOSEN

The Chosen is a novel of complex and intricate human relationships. The primary relationship is that of two fifteen year old Jewish boys, Danny Saunders and Reuven Malter, who under ordinary circumstances would not be friends. Although Danny and Reuven are both Orthodox Jews, Danny is a Hasid, while Reuven is not.

Hasidic Jews are led by a Tzaddik, meaning "righteous one."

Every word a Tzaddik speaks is considered to be holy and a direct link to God. Hasids are a very close-knit, insular group of people devoted to the study of the Torah. All secular literature is forbidden. They wear dark clothes patterned after their ancestors and the men wear payos (side-curls) and tall black hats. Hasidic Jews consider a person like Reuven to be "apikoros" - this refers to a Jew who has been educated in the basic tenets of Judaism but does not necessarily adopt all the beliefs and practices of the Hasidic Jew.

The setting of this story is Brooklyn, New York during World War II. The Americans have just entered the war and the English teachers in the Jewish parochial school system insist that the yeshiva boys show the rest of the world that they are just as physically fit as their Gentile counterparts. Hence competitive leagues are organized in a variety of sports and Danny and Reuven meet as rivals on a baseball field.

Despite admonitions from fellow team members that Danny's team is a group of "murderers," Reuven approaches the game with an air of confidence and nonchalance, since he knows that Hasidic boys devote most of their time to scrupulous study of the Torah rather than physical fitness.

Injured in the game and hospitalized, Reuven is angry with Danny and reluctant to accept his heartfelt concern when he comes to visit him at the hospital. Danny, however, is honest and humorous, and remains persistent in his warm approach to Reuven. When Reuven's

father tells him that the Talmud recommends that a person do two things for himself: "one is to acquire a teacher, and the other is to "choose a friend," Reuven finally accepts Danny's invitation for friendship (p. 74).

Danny has a phenomenal mind and his Hasidic background dictates that he dedicate himself solely to the study of the Torah to the exclusion of everything else. Danny's father is the great Reb Saunders, the leader of their sect, a man known for his brilliance as a Talmudist and his compassion for human affairs. The position of the Tzaddik is an inherited one. This is the silent pain in Danny's life. He does not want to live an existence of intellectual entrapment like his father does. He would actually prefer to become a psychologist. The irony of this story is that Reuven has been groomed by his father to become a mathematics professor and he would prefer to be a rabbi. Their paths have criss-crossed.

Reb Saunders has an unusual relationship with his son. When Danny was a boy, Reb Saunders realized that his son was a genius. He gobbled up books at an alarming rate and was able to repeat them word for word. This frightened the Reb. He wanted a son with a heart as well as a mind. He cried to the Master of the Universe:

> What have you done to me? A mind like this I need for a son? A heart I need for a son, a <u>soul</u> I need for a son, <u>compassion</u> I want from my son, righteousness, mercy, strength to suffer and carry pain, <u>that</u> I want from my son, not a mind without a soul! (p. 264)

The Reb felt the development of the soul was of primary importance. He, therefore, made the difficult decision of not relating to Danny in his formerly loving and companionable way after Danny was ten. He actually stopped talking to Danny except in matters related to the Torah. He wanted Danny to reach inside himself for the answers to life. He wanted him to experience the pain and suffering of others. The Reb describes his son's experience:

> He was bewildered and hurt. The nightmares he began to have.... But he learned to find answers for himself. He suffered and learned to listen to the suffering of others. In the silence between us, he began to hear the world crying. (p. 267)

Although Danny was perplexed and wounded by the silence between them, he respected his father deeply and somehow trusted that he was doing the right thing.

Despite the wall of silence between them, Reb Saunders knew that Danny needed a good friend. He needed somebody with whom he could talk and share his experiences. After putting Reuven through a rigorous and dramatic "test," Reb Saunders not only approved of their relationship, he actually encouraged Reuven to come around on Sabbath afternoons and participate in their Talmudic discussions. Reuven became an accepted part of the family.

In contrast to the awesome relationship between Danny and his father, Reuven and his father, have a very close and communicative relationship. Reuven is able to tell his Dad everything. They have long, cosy conversations sipping tea well into the night. Reuven's

mother is no longer alive and the bond between father and son is a very strong one. They both nurture and support one another.

David Malter is not only a parent to his son, Reuven, he is also a teacher. He spends endless hours teaching Reuven the history of the Jews, his philosophy on life, and the scientific method of studying the Talmud. Reuven deeply respects and admires his Dad.

David Malter and Reb Saunders do not see eye to eye on many issues but they each recognize the "soul" in each other and are pleased with their sons' friendship. After the war, however, David Malter becomes increasingly involved in Zionist politics--this refers to the establishment of a Jewish State--and Reb Saunders cannot tolerate this. He firmly believes that a Jewish state of Israel cannot be established until the advent of the Messiah. He, therefore, forbids his son to talk to Reuven. And so, now, a ban of silence is imposed upon the two boys.

Both boys suffer terribly over their ensuing separation, but Danny seems to keep his pain to himself (he has had long years of practice), while Reuven is visibly outraged by the situation. He begins to hate the smoldering silence between them with a passion. His father suffers a heart attack and he really feels the need of Danny's friendship at this time. When the State of Israel finally becomes a fact and Arab states begin to invade and attack it, Reb Saunders retracts his harsh position and allows the two boys to reunite.

Since the Reb cannot communicate to his son directly he uses Reuven as a vehicle to do so. In a very moving moment for all three of

them, Reb Saunders makes it clear to Danny that he is aware of his decision to abandon the Tzaddikate and become a psychologist. Through Reuven the Reb explains to Danny why he chose to raise him in silence and what a painful decision it was for him to make. He expresses his deep caring for his son and finally speaks to him directly. He wants to know if Danny will remain an observant Jew. After he is satisfied that Danny will not leave the fold, he sighs with relief and proclaims:

> Let my Daniel become a psychologist. I have no more fear now. All his life he will be a tzaddik. He will be a tzaddik for the world. And the world needs a tzaddik. (p. 267)

The Reb knows that his method of bringing up his son has reaped the desired benefits. The silence imposed between them has carved out Danny's soul. Danny has learned to listen to silence and answer his own questions in life. He has learned to suffer and care deeply for others. He has learned to be a self-directed man, and make his own choices. In doing all of this, he has chosen to take a path apart from his father's but one closely aligned with the role of a Tzaddik--a psychologist that is a leader and a helper of people. He will restore their souls as his father helped him restore his own.

Danny Saunders

The Chosen revolves around the extraordinary character of Danny Saunders, a Hasidic Jewish boy, who as firstborn son of the Reb is expected to carry on his father's work as spiritual leader to the Hasidic community. A Hasid usually confines himself to speaking Yiddish and

studying the Talmud. Danny, however, speaks English impeccably, reads voraciously and is an accomplished athlete.

Physically Danny is described as tall and lanky with "long arms and legs that seemed all bones and angles...." (p. 16). "He moved in a loose-jointed, disheveled sort of way, all arms and legs" (p. 18). He had sand-coloured hair, deep blue eyes, a straight pointed nose and full lips. His face was composed of straight, angular lines: it "seemed to have been cut from stone" (p. 17).

This combination of angularity and unrestrained energy can be metaphorically applied to his intellectual life as well. Danny's sharply focused mind is capable of studying a subject in depth, yet it demands to roam free. It cannot be confined to one area of study.

After completing his daily study of "two blatt" of Talmud (this is four pages, considered to be an extraordinary amount), Danny sneaks over to the Public Library where he intoxicates himself with the great works of English Literature and the scientific writings of Darwin, Huxley and Freud. There he meets a scholarly gentleman who recommends to him worthwhile books. This "scholarly gentleman" happens to be David Malter, Reuven's father, who is astounded with Danny's photographic memory and comprehensive ability to absorb new material. Of Danny's phenomenal mind he says: "once in a generation is a mind like that born" (p. 106).

Danny spends a considerable amount of time in quiet reflection. He believes that "what's inside us is the greatest mystery of all" (p. 148).

Hence his interest in Freud and psychology. In order to study Freud in depth he teaches himself the German language; this is a struggle for him, but nevertheless he perseveres. Reuven is appalled that he would dare to study the language of Hitler. This is an example of Danny's need to step beyond societal boundaries in order to be true to himself.

It is very important for Danny to understand things. He says to Reuven: "Whenever I do or see something I don't understand, I like to think about it until I understand it" (p. 66). With this in mind he attempts to understand why he literally wanted to kill Reuven on the baseball field. He is also troubled by the real motive behind his concern over his brother's health. With painful surprise he discovers that his concern about his younger brother's health has primarily been related to the possibility of little Levi eventually taking over the role of the Tzaddik. This way Danny could be free to become a psychologist. He expresses this realization to Reuven:

> It also occurred to me recently that all my concern about my brother's health was a fake. I don't have much of a relationship with him at all. He's such a kid. I pity him a little, that's all. I was really concerned about his health because all along I've wanted him to be able to take my father's place. That was something, all right, when I realized that. (p. 190)

Danny must live according to his inner integrity. He must be free to pursue his own interests. He fears being trapped by some categorization or position as he observes his father is. He protests to

Reuven:

> I want to be able to breathe, to think what I want to think, to say the things I want to say. I'm trapped now, too. Do you know what it's like to be trapped? ... It's the most hellish, choking, constricting feeling in the world. I scream with every bone in my body to get out of it. My mind cries to get out of it. But I can't. Not now. One day I will, though. I'll want you around on that day, friend. I'll need you around on that day. (p. 191)

Danny lives life with serious intensity, but not without humour. He is able to laugh at himself easily. When Reuven is happy to see him one day at the hospital he laughs and says: "I must be the Messiah. No mere Hasid would get a greeting like that from an apikoros" (p. 78). With wit and humour he innocently makes fun of their differences.

Their different alliances in the Jewish faith cause a temporary rift in their relationship for a couple of years. Reb Saunders forbids Danny to see Reuven because of his father's involvement in the Zionist organization. To outward appearances, they do not talk to one another, but internally they are still connected, often glancing at each other with caring sensitivity. When Reb Saunders finally allows Danny to see Reuven again, they have an argument concerning the Reb and his prohibitive use of "silence." They express their feelings very differently. Reuven expresses his outrage openly and passionately; Danny is more reserved and inhibited. One gets the impression that Danny weighs things carefully inside himself before he offers a response. He bases his choice of expression on his inner integrity and

his sensitivity towards others: he does not want to harm anyone unintentionally by what he says or does. He is self-controlled and self-directed, whereas Reuven is not. Reuven simply blurts out whatever emotion is there without reflecting on the consequences of his regurgitation. The following passage illustrates this:

> "How do you take the silence?"
> He didn't say anything. But his face tightened.
> "I hated it," I told him. "How do you take it?"
> He pulled nervously at an earlock, his eyes dark and brooding.
> "I think I would lose my mind," I said.
> "No you wouldn't," he said softly. "You'd learn to live with it."
> "Why does he do it?"
> The hand pulling at the earlock dropped down to the table. He shook his head slowly. "I don't know. We still don't talk."
> "Except when you study Talmud or he explodes."
> He nodded soberly.
> "I hate to tell you what I think of your father."
> "He's a great man," Danny said evenly. "He must have a reason."
> "I think it's crazy and sadistic," I said bitterly. "And I don't like your father at all."
> "You're entitled to your opinion," Danny said softly. "And I'm entitled to mine." (p. 243-244)

Having been raised in silence Danny has had to look inside his soul for the answers. At first he is hurt and bewildered by the sudden change in his relationship with his father: formerly a very close and intimate one, there was now an unspeakable distance between them. However, Danny trusts his father implicitly and knows that he is acting out of love. Later he even begins to appreciate the "silence." It becomes his teacher, his Buddha in the stream of life. He explains to Reuven:

> You can listen to silence, Reuven. I've begun to realize that you can listen to silence and learn from it. It has a quality and dimension all its own. It talks to me sometimes. I feel myself alive in it. It talks. And I can hear it.
>
> You have to want to listen to it, and then you can hear it. It has a strange, beautiful texture. It doesn't always talk. Sometimes-sometimes it cries, and you can hear the pain of the world in it. It hurts to listen to it then. But you have to. (p. 249)

Through listening intently to the silence of his soul, Danny becomes his own person. He becomes a self-determined man. It is no surprise, then, that in the end Danny makes his own choices and chooses his own path. In fact, it is inconceivable to imagine that a person who has spent so much time listening to his inner voice, could be anything other than himself. This is the ultimate beauty of this temporary siege of silence. It allows Danny to truly discover himself. It gives him the freedom to be "who he ought to be."

MY NAME IS ASHER LEV

My Name is Asher Lev is a novel about a young Brooklyn prodigy with a gift for expressing himself through art. The time frame is the late 1940's and 50's in Brooklyn, New York. Asher's pursuit of his gift and the ensuing pain and disruption it causes his family and community are the essential elements of this story.

The protagonist is the young Asher Lev, a four year old boy with flaming red hair and dark burning eyes. He spends his early years

immersed in drawing, transforming the world around him into line, form and color. What is unusual about little Asher is his seriousness and devotion to his art. What is painful and anguishing about his gift is that he is an Orthodox Jewish boy, a Hasid with payos, and the primary task of an observant Jewish boy is to study the Torah, not to indulge in the world of art. Asher cannot control his compulsive need to draw everything in sight and this causes his parents great concern and discomfort.

Asher's father, Aryeh, holds a responsible position with the Rebbe as his personal emissary. He is openly displeased with his son's gift and believes that it is sheer foolishness. He hopes that eventually Asher will outgrow this capricious behaviour. Rivkeh Lev, Asher's mother, encourages Asher's expression of himself through drawings and paintings but she also believes his gift is the frivolity and distraction of a young boy.

Aryeh cannot reconcile himself to Asher's choice in life to become an artist, and eventually regards his son with deliberate distance and cool indifference. His mother is caught between two realms. On one hand she wishes to support her husband's attitudes; on the other hand she wishes to nurture her son's creativity. The pain and anguish that she suffers on this account becomes the subject matter of one of Asher's later masterpieces - the Brooklyn Crucifixion.

On this canvas, Asher displays his mother's tortuous pain and anguish by placing her on a crucifix. In one direction she looks with

torment-filled eyes at her husband carrying an attache case; and in the other direction she looks with tearing anguish at her son with his fisherman's cap holding a palette and brush. For Asher to paint this ultimate in wrenching pain and anguish, he must step out of his tradition and borrow an aesthetic mold from another tradition - the Christian crucifix. It is this movement away from Jewish Orthodoxy that marks his final separation from family and community. He has overstepped the boundaries.

In his efforts to paint the truth as he sees it, he has attacked something fundamental to the core of Orthodox Judaism - too much Jewish blood, he is told, had been spilled because of that man? (this referring to Jesus). His parents cannot accept his actions. The Rebbe asks him to leave and continue his painting in Europe.

Asher Lev represents the artist who must be true to himself and in order to paint something of ultimate value transcends the boundaries of his biological and socially determined upbringing. He adheres to the following philosophy:

> ... every great artist is a man who has freed himself from his family, his nation, his race. Every man who has shown the world the way to beauty, to true culture, has been a rebel, a "universal" without patriotism, without home, who has found his people everywhere. (p. 195)

Asher begins as a young, egocentric child preoccupied with his art, and becomes an autonomous, authentic individual willing to risk the loss of his family and friends in order to paint the Truth.

Asher Lev

Asher Lev is a precocious child. At the age of four, he transforms the world around him "to pieces of paper, margins of books, bare expanses of wall" (p. 11) with ease and ingenuity. He has a gift which he calls "unique and disquieting." Unique because of his skill and mastery at such a young age; disquieting because as a Hasidic Jewish boy, he is supposed to be dedicated to the study of the Torah and not the world of art.

He is born into a family "freighted with Jewish responsibility" (p. 11). His father comes from a line of brilliant scholars and saintly leaders. The responsibility to conform to the goals set for persons of such distinguished heritage is overwhelming for Asher.

Asher has terrifying dreams of his "mythic ancestor," his father's great-great-grandfather, "a man of mythic dimensions, tall, dark-bearded, powerful of mind and body, a brilliant entrepreneur; a beneficent supporter of academies of learning, a legendary traveler, and author..." (p. 10). This great man seems to represent everything that Asher is not. Asher frequently dreams that his mythic ancestor thunders through black forests to tower over him in malevolent rage, prickling his conscience with onerous exhortations: "Wasting time, wasting time ... playing, drawing, wasting time...." (p. 39). As Asher aptly describes his experience: "It was no joy waking up after a dream about that man. He left a taste of thunder in my mouth" (p. 10).

Asher is very preoccupied with himself as a little boy. His self-

absorption coupled with his unusual gift makes it extremely difficult for him to have friends his own age. His companions are his "Eberhard and Crayola" (p. 12).

Asher's attention to detail brings him to a point of such total absorption that routine tasks, normal interactions and casual observations are almost impossible. Each one becomes a major enterprise to be analyzed in fascinating detail. For example, while attempting to drink his milk, Asher tries to figure out the colour of ice: "Ice is white ... white like milk. No, not white like milk. There is blue in ice. And gray ... What color is the feeling cold?" (p. 43). Consequently, his imaginative and intellectually curious nature elicits annoyance from those who have to deal with him. Imagine the frustration of the Lev's housekeeper who simply wants Asher to finish his milk and cookies so she can get on with her work.

Asher is emotionally oversensitive. He continually over-reacts and is prone to feeling fear and dread, yet he is also able to express these painful reactions to life through his art. When Asher's mother succumbs to serious illness over her brother's death, Asher becomes very upset. He attempts to buoy up her spirits with drawings of pretty flowers and birds, but to no avail: she remains depressed. He describes his immense fear in the following way: "I was frightened in a dark and trembling way I had never known before. I went to my desk ... I found myself in front of a drawing filled with black and red swirls and gray eyes and dead birds" (p. 24).

His parents want him to go to Vienna with them so that Aryeh can complete Hassidic work in Europe. Asher refuses to go. He is desperately attached to places that are familiar to him and he does not want to leave his "crying street." He is extremely distressed about the possibility of going to Europe, making no effort to hide his feelings. He tells everyone he meets that he does not want to go to Vienna. He is frightened to leave his street and again his pictures communicate his terror; he draws the Ladover building in flames; a cat underneath the wheels of a car, and the Rebbe with an evil smile, all to emphasize his resentment and fear regarding the Rebbe's orders for his father to live and work in Vienna.

His emotional sensitivity is also demonstrated in reaction to his gift. Anguished over the pain that it causes himself and his family, he does not know whether his gift is the will of God or comes from the "Other Side." When he feels that his gift comes from a positive, benign force he feels potent - "there was nothing I could not do" (p. 52). He wants to "bring life to all the wide and tired world" (p. 39). But when he feels that his gift comes from the Sitra Achra - the Other Side, he is overcome by feelings of dread and futility. He struggles painfully with this deep ambivalence. For a few, short years he even stops drawing.

A transformation occurs for Asher when he begins to see things in a different way:

> That was the night I began to realize that something was happening to my eyes. I looked at my father and saw lines and planes I had never seen before. I could feel with my eyes ... I could feel lines and points and planes. I could feel texture and color.... I felt myself flooded with the shapes and textures of the world around me. (p. 105-106)

As he begins to draw again, his appreciation and respect for his gift grows. Asher is no longer afraid of his gift as an uncontrollable and confusing urge. He must draw. And he must draw well. He draws with the whole of his being. Nothing can deter him now, nothing can get in his way. When his father rages at him that his drawing is mere foolishness, he retorts:

> Please don't call it foolishness anymore, Papa ... Foolishness is something that's stupid ... Foolishness is something that a person shouldn't do. Foolishness is something that brings harm to the world. Foolishness is a waste of time. Please don't ever call it foolishness anymore, Papa. (p. 125)

On the other hand, this revitalization of his gift produces more introversion and self-absorption. Asher becomes very absent-minded. He finds himself drawing things without realizing that he has done so, such as the picture of the Rebbe in his Chumash. He wanders the streets looking at people in a wondrous, magical way--they become the new subjects of his art. He does not really listen to people anymore, so intent is he on how he can paint them or his surroundings. An illustration of this focused concentration is his visit to the mashpia's office to discuss his reluctance to go to Vienna. The mashpia is talking to him but he does not listen; instead he notices that it is raining:

> "Look, it's raining again," I said. I could see the fat drops hurtle through the darkness and explode against the window. How could I ever draw or paint that? ... The mashpia was saying something about Vienna but I would not listen. The darkness was gone from the street and I could see the trees beneath the lashing rain. The rain moved in waterfalls across the ashphalt. The curbs were flooded with rushing streams of dark water. Oh, if I could paint this, I thought. Ribbono Shel Olom, if I could paint this world, this clean world of rain and patterns on glass, and trees on my street, and people beneath the trees. I would even paint and draw pain and suffering if I could paint and draw the other, too. I would paint the rain as tears and I would paint the rain as waters of purification. What do you want from me? Ribbono Shel Olom, it's your gift. Why don't you show them it's your gift? (p. 129-130)

Asher's drawing has a compulsive intensity that is so compelling, he will tear at the wood of his pencil with his fingernails to get to the lead. His compulsion to draw is such that it even overrides moral principles: Asher does not have enough money to buy all of the equipment he needs, so he steals some brushes and tubes of oil. He is horrified that his compulsion to paint has caused him to steal. He says:

> I felt myself filled with horror. The gift had caused me to steal. I hated the gift.... The gift was making me ill and causing everyone around me to suffer - and I hated it, despised it, wanted to burn and destroy it, felt toward it a mountainous rage. (p. 142)

At a very young age Asher shows signs of autonomy and distinction. His uncle glances at his drawings and calls him a regular Chagall. He replies quietly, yet clearly: "No, my name is Asher Lev" (p. 35). He knows who he is. When in the throes of a difficult conversation with

his mother, he begins to walk away from her. She says: "Asher, we're in the middle of talking." He replies: "I finished talking, Mama" (p. 61). He is very stubborn about not wanting to go to Vienna. He relies on his intuition. He says: "I don't want to go. I'm afraid to go. Something inside me says I shouldn't go" (p. 108). His father in an effort to persuade him to come to Vienna explains to him that he must travel in order to save Jewish lives and spread the word of the Torah. Asher replies: "I'm also a Jewish life ... I'm also precious in the eyes of the Ribbono Shel Olom ... Does somebody have a responsibility to me?" (p. 108).

Eventually Asher's father leaves for Europe when the Rebbe intervenes on Asher's behalf permitting him to stay behind. The Rebbe is very kind and loving towards Asher. He maintains that God allows us "glimpses" and it is our responsibility to open up our eyes to a greater vision. The Rebbe has been advised by a trusted Jewish artist that Asher has potential for greatness. This is a "glimpse" for him. From this glimpse, he encourages Asher to study French and Russian as it will benefit him in the world of art. Furthermore, he arranges for Asher to study under the great Jacob Kahn. He does all of this hoping that Asher will not renounce his Judaism.

Jacob Kahn proves to be an excellent and demanding teacher. He insists that Asher paint with integrity. He challenges Asher to commit himself to excellence and truth by painting only what is "real" rather than placate the public.

Jacob warns Asher not to become a "whore" to his own existence. He notices that Asher has begun to wear his earlocks behind his ears. He comments on this:

> Asher Lev, an artist who deceives himself is a fraud and a whore. You did that because you were ashamed. You did that because wearing payos did not fit your idea of an artist. Asher Lev, an artist is a person first. He is an individual. If there is no person, there is no artist. (p. 244)

Asher does develop into an autonomous and authentic spirit and personality, however, he does this at great cost to himself and his family. Jacob Kahn indicates that the only way Asher can justify this pain is to become a great painter, a painter of the Truth:

> Asher Lev paints good pictures and hurts people he loves. Then be a great painter, Asher Lev; that will be the only justification for all the pain you will cause. But as a great painter I will cause pain again if I must. Then become a greater painter. But I will cause pain again. Then become a still greater painter. Master of the Universe, will I live this way the rest of my life? (p. 348)

Asher feels deeply tormented that his use of nudes and Christian religious symbols hurts his family so much. He defends himself in the following way:

> I had not willfully hurt anyone. What did I have to justify? ... I wanted to paint because I wanted to paint. I wanted to paint the same way my father wanted to travel and work for the Rebbe. My father worked for Torah. I worked for - what? ... For a truth I did not know how to put into words. For a truth I could only bring to life by means of color and line and texture and form. (p. 264)

Recognition as a famous artist does not resolve the anguish inherent in the conflict of whether his gift is good or evil:

> Asher Lev, Hasid. Asher Lev, painter. I looked at my right hand, the hand with which I painted. There was power in that hand. Power to create and destroy. Power to bring pleasure and pain. Power to amuse and horrify. There was in that hand the demonic and the divine at one and the same time. The demonic and the divine were two aspects of the same force ... Creativity was demonic and divine. Art was demonic and divine. (p. 348)

Who is Asher Lev? Is he good or is he evil? Asher manages to transcend this dichotomy by pursuing the truth and creating his own forms to express it. An inner voice whispers to him:

> Paint the anguish of all the world. Let people see the pain. But create your own molds and your own play of forms for the pain. We must give a balance to the universe. (p. 348)

Confronted with the essence of anguish, Asher is driven to paint the anguish his mother experienced feeling torn between her husband's needs and her son's creativity. He steps out of his tradition and uses the Christian crucifix to symbolize the universality of pain and anguish. Anticipating his family's violent reaction to this mode of expression, his torment is deep, but he cannot avoid painting the ultimate truth. The Brooklyn Crucifixion is noted as a masterpiece in the world of art. As a result of this painting Asher is alienated from his Hassidic community, his family's reaction is as predicted, and the Rebbe kindly but firmly asks him to leave the U.S. to resume his painting in Europe.

"Asher Lev," the Rebbe said softly. "You have crossed a boundary.

I cannot help you. You are alone now. I give you my blessings" (p. 347-348).

In his need to paint the truth, Asher has overstepped the boundaries of his Hasidic heritage and traditions ... he cannot turn back. He is alone now, but he is united with all the servants of truth who have found their people everywhere.

Rivkeh Lev

Rivkeh is depicted as a small, "delicately-boned" woman with a "longish straight nose, clear brown eyes" and "high-boned cheeks" (p. 12). She is described as being slight and fragile, barely able to sustain her frail constitution: to Asher she is more like an elder sister than a mother; to Aryeh, she is more like a child needing protection than a wife. As the story develops, however, she emerges as a strong woman deeply supportive of and sensitive to her family's needs.

Rivkeh comes from a line of pious Hasidic Jews, on her father's side from the "saintliest of Hasidic leaders," and on her mother's side from the cream of intelligentsia.

Yaakov, Rivkeh's only brother is killed in a car accident while travelling for the Rebbe. She is devastated by this. Her tenuously balanced constitution cannot carry the weight of this tragedy. She breaks and becomes severely ill. Her screams cut like slivers of glass (p. 18). She seeks refuge in her bed and childhood memories. She abandons the care of her apartment and family: "She wept easily. She tired easily. She cared nothing for the apartment, for food, for

the things a person must do to stay alive" (p. 21). Friends and relatives come to pay their respects to her dead brother but she cannot relate to them. She sits shriveled up in a chair silently uneasy. She appears as a "ghostly spectator, hollow, without a core to her being" (p. 25).

As her illness progresses she talks to her dead brother in barely discernible, haunted whispers: "Yaakov, you had to go? You left it unfinished. Who said you had to go?" (p. 26). And as she slowly begins to recover she says one day to her husband: "It is wrong to leave things unfinished" (p. 45) ... "I want to finish my brother's work" (p. 49). With quiet, yet firm persistence she convinces Aryeh to speak to the Rebbe on her behalf. Consequently, she is granted permission to enrol in college to study her brother's subjects - history and Russian affairs.

This is unheard of in the Hasidic community where stereotyped roles of men and women prevail: men are supposed to study, acquiring professions of service to the community; women are supposed to stay at home and nurture their families. Rivkeh becomes the first woman in her community to receive a doctorate.

College life brightens up her existence considerably. She works diligently and takes pride in her accomplishments. Her tiny kitchen is converted into a study after dinner, piled neatly with her textbooks and notebooks. She works endlessly for hours and this causes undue strain on her relationship with Asher. He deeply misses their close times

together. His mother becomes less like a "gentle big sister" (p. 12) and more like an "efficient organizer" (p. 55).

Rivkeh is torn in many ways. She wants to complete her brother's work, at the same time being a support to her husband, and a proper mother to Asher. Her most harrowing conflict lies in her mediating position between her husband and son. Aryeh is harsh in his disapproval of his son's gift. He believes that it is sheer foolishness and a menacing force from the "Other Side." Yet, Asher must paint just as Aryeh must travel. Rivkeh attempts to support them both, nurturing in each that which is of fundamental importance. She stands between them protecting one from the other. Asher describes her difficult position:

> Standing between two different ways of giving meaning to the world, and at the same time possessed by her own fears and memories, she had moved now toward me, now toward my father, keeping both worlds of meaning alive, nourishing with her tiny being, and despite her torments, both me and my father. Paint pretty pictures, Asher, she had said. Make the world pretty. Show me your good drawings, Asher. Why have you stopped drawing? She had kept the gift alive during the dead years; and she had kept herself alive by picking up her dead brother's work and had kept my father alive by enabling him to resume his journeys. Trapped between two realms of meaning she had straddled both realms, quietly feeding and nourishing them both, and herself as well. (p. 309)

One gets a sense of her deep pain and anguish as Rivkeh looks out the window waiting for her husband to return safely from his travels, or her son to return from his trips to the museum. This intense inner

torment becomes the subject matter of Asher's acclaimed masterpiece, the Brooklyn Crucificion. His memory of his mother constantly standing by the window is transformed into her twisted and arched body on a crucifix, looking with torment-filled eyes at her son who stands on one side of her with his paintbrush and palette and her husband who stands on the other side of her with his attache case.

When Rivkeh sees this "family portrait" on display at her son's exhibit, this is too much for her to bear. For her, as well as her husband, Asher has gone too far: "There are limits, Asher ... Everything has a limit" (p. 342). She still cares deeply for her son but she lets him go. The "family portrait" has disintegrated.

Aryeh Lev

> In order for there to be a connection between man and the Master of the Universe, there must first be an opening, a passageway, even a passageway as small as the eye of a needle ... Jews in Europe are starving for Torah ... The Rebbe is sending me to Europe to make passageways for them. This is more important than anything else ... Nothing is more important in the eyes of the Master of the Universe than a Jewish life. (p. 107-108)

This statement is the governing principle of Aryeh Lev's life. Aryeh is the disconsolate father of the "notorious and legendary" Asher Lev (p. 9). A highly principled and committed man Aryeh has been entrusted with the task of building and promoting centres of Jewish study throughout the world. He believes that the most sacred thing in life is a Jewish soul and that this soul receives its nourishment

from the divine light of the Torah.

For a man who is physically robust and emotionally unyielding, there is a part to Aryeh's character that is gentle, discrete, accepting and oft times poetic. On Festival afternoons, he would take little Asher in hand and climb to the top of the roof of his apartment building. There he would view God's beautiful creation:

> "It's only a taste," my father said once, looking out across the buildings and the trees. "But remember, Asher, some tastes remain a long time on the tongue. A taste of the Ribbono Shel Olom ..." (p. 151).

On difficult occasions such as the death of his mother and brother-in-law, Aryeh takes refuge and comfort in a melodious psalm taught to him by his father. It is through this haunting tune of "pain and suffering ... faith and hope" (p. 18) that Aryeh's deepest feelings are expressed:

> There was an unearthly quality to the way he sang that melody that night - as if he were winging through unknown worlds in search of sources of strength beyond himself. His eyes were open, fixed, but gazing inward. There was a sweetness and a sadness, a sense of pain and yearning in his voice - soft, tremulous, climbing and falling and climbing again. (p. 19-20)

It is difficult for Aryeh to deal with his personal tension and conflict. He appears to quietly smolder inside until with rage and frustration he explodes. Aryeh's major conflict is with his son. As dedicated as Aryeh is to the study of the Torah, it is painfully ironic for him to have a son preoccupied with trivial drawings. For Aryeh,

Asher's gift is "at best a frivolity and at worst a desecration" (p. 264). His worst fear is that Asher will become a "goy."

Aryeh's rage with Asher explodes violently on one of his first homecomings from Europe when he learns that Asher is using Christian symbolism in his drawings:

> He was in an uncontrollable rage. I had never before seen him in such a rage ... My drawings had touched something fundamental to his being. He kept talking about my drawings of "that man" ... Did I know how much Jewish blood had been spilled because of that man? Did I know that his father ... my grandfather, had been murdered by a Russian peasant who was celebrating a holiday having to do with that man? ... Whose son was I? What had I been learning all these years? ... Why wasn't I studying? ... Did I want to shame him? Did I want to shame myself?
>
> Day after day this went on. He did not talk to me anymore; he shouted. In the night, I heard him shouting at my mother. They began to fight regularly. (p. 166-167)

The meaning in Aryeh's life is primarily derived from his work. He is repeatedly haunted by a memory of his father's ill-timed death. His father was a great scholar and emissary for the Rebbe's father. Together they were making plans to start underground yeshivos in the Ukraine. They were so engrossed in their work one night that they did not realize it was the night before Easter. That night his father was killed by a drunken peasant. "Plans had been made and had been left unfinished. A life had been lost because of those plans and the plans had been left unfulfilled" (p. 114). Aryeh feels driven to execute those plans and complete his father's work.

It is painful for Aryeh that his son does not wish to follow his line of work. He finds his son's desire to be an artist incomprehensible and a mystery to his sense of moral values. The final blow for Aryeh is Asher's painting of the Brooklyn Crucifixion. This is too much for him to bear. Asher has desecrated what has been most meaningful to Aryeh in his life--the Torah and Jewish lives. Aryeh sees the symbol of the crucifix as something blasphemous and dangerous to his way of life. It comes from the "Other Side." He cannot forgive Asher for this. He no longer understands him or his terms of reference. Aryeh may suffer from some form of "aesthetic blindness" but to him his son suffers from "moral blindness."

One day Asher climbs the steps to his father's office and notices his father talking on the telephone. Aryeh looks at him directly with his clear, piercingly sharp eyes and swivels his chair around, thus, turning his back on Asher. This act is symbolic of Aryeh's decision to turn his back on his son. He cannot forgive him this final transgression. His son is not his own.

IN THE BEGINNING

In the Beginning focuses on the struggles of the Lurie family as they make a new beginning in America in the early 1920's, leaving behind the violence and anti-semitism of their native Poland. Their ensuing experiences in a strange country during the pre- and post-Depression era constitute the essence of this story.

Max, the father of the family is a man of honour and social responsibility. Always motivated by a deep sense of duty, he sees his task in life as providing for his family and helping other Jews emigrate to America. Back in Poland, during World War I, he made a powerful impact on his community when he organized the Am Kedoshim society, an organization dedicated to fighting social injustice.

Ruth, his wife is a shadow character who spends her time writing to her family in Poland and dreaming about her past on a farm near Bobrek. This brings her a sense of comfort and emotional stability. Davey, their first son, is the central character of the book. We see the story unfold through his vision, thoughts and imagination. Alex, his younger brother, is a lesser character in the Lurie family, and is described as being similar to Max--physically robust and dynamic.

This book is one of strong emotional expression. Max is emotionally volatile, vacillating from moods of brooding silence to explosive outbursts of rage and frustration. Ruth is continually fearful, constantly mumbling nonsensical incantations to herself to ward off Evil. Davey spends much of his time shuddering and worrying about the next "accident" he might have.

Much of what occurs throughout the story is the result of prevailing anti-semitism of the time: Max and Ruth leave Poland because of pogroms. The Am Kedoshim society is formed as a vehicle for fighting these organized massacres. David undertakes the study of scientific Bible criticism as a highly sophisticated method of retaliation for the

misinterpretations of the Torah written by Christian scholars and theologians.

As Davey is the principal character, the focus of the story is on his experiences and reactions to life. It is through David Lurie's survival of a perilous and fragile childhood that the reader is brought to examine the following questions: What is the meaning of life? What is our function? Is life merely a series of random "accidents," or do we have any control over our destiny?

The development of David Lurie's character takes us through a childhood filled with sickness and accidents, loneliness and fear, to an adulthood filled with moral strength and a resolve to seek the truth regardless of the direction this search may take. So as his father physically fought social injustice, David Lurie chooses to fight the contemporary Goliath of deception and hidden truth in the scholarly world of Bible criticism. This decision requires that he abandon the security of Orthodox Jewish thought and philosophy to mix with goyim and non-observant Jews. To do this honestly and effectively, David Lurie must become his own person and make a new beginning.

<u>David Lurie</u>

Through the eyes of the young David Lurie we see an image of what it was like to be Jewish living in America during the pre- and post-Depression period and World War II.

Davey is an exceptional child unusually sensitive and caring for a young boy. From infancy, he has been plagued with severe bouts of

illness due to an accident that occurred as his mother was carrying him home from the hospital. She tripped on the stoop of their apartment building and they both fell. Although the doctor did not discover Davey's injury until he was six years old, he had suffered a deviated septum in his nose. This condition caused him to be susceptible to all kinds of viral and bacterial diseases.

Davey was slight of build, too short for his age, pale and thin, and nervous most of the time. He rarely felt truly vibrant and energetic and when he did it was only for short periods. He spent most of his time under the cool white milky sheet world he had created for himself, thinking, dreaming, fantasizing and wondering.

Davey finds the adult world very perplexing to his curious and acutely perceptive nature. His curiosity gets him into trouble some of the time. For example, one day while visiting the house of Mr. Bader he wanders to the study and spots an old, crinkled photograph with the Hebrew words "Am Kedoshim" and the numbers 1919 printed on it. His father and forty of his soldier friends are pictured carrying weapons. Since it was against the Polish law at the time for Jews to be carrying weapons this is a dangerous picture for Davey to have recognized. When Davey mentions the photograph to his parents they are appalled and frightened and vehemently deny its existence. Of course, the more they pretend that the photograph is simply a child's fabrication, the more Davey insists that he truly did see it.

Davey is terribly confused: he has seen a photograph that

apparently does not exist and he is suffering from an injury that he is not supposed to have and life is full of strange, random events that he cannot understand. It seems to little Davey that he is inadvertently harming others or being harmed himself. For example, he is sick one day with a dry throat and clogged nose and cannot breathe well. He opens the window forgetting that the canary is out of its cage and whoosh, the canary flies out. Max smacks Davey angrily informing him rather cruelly that a cat will now eat the bird. Davey is horrified and neglects to tell his Dad that he nearly fell out the window in an attempt to save the bird. Another time Davey is sitting dutifully watching his brother in the pram when Mrs. Horowitz's dog Shagitz urinates on one of the wheels of the carriage and pokes his friendly head inside the pram. Davey with strict instructions from his father to "keep that filthy dog away from the carriage" (p. 37) gives the dog an open smack on his hindquarters and the dog rushes out onto the street and is quickly killed by a car.

Davey does not like the randomness and insecurity of this "accident-world." He complains to his cousin Saul: "I hate accidents. Why does God make accidents?" (p. 82). In most cases Davey finds himself the innocent victim of irreconcilable circumstances. He relives the horror of these shocking incidents in his fever dreams and nightmares which serve to purge his guilt:

> At night I dreamed of the dog and the blood and the eye dangling from the socket by the single thread of flesh. I cried in the darkness when I

> woke from my dreams. They had really both been accidents. But I cried bitterly - for the scattering of yellow feathers that had once been our bird and for the crumpled mass of hair and flesh and bones that had once been Mrs. Horowitz's dog. And for the feeling I had that somehow no one really believed me when I said that they had both been accidents ... (p. 39)

The thought of violence and killing disgusts Davey and the fact that he has been directly involved in the killing of two creatures greatly disturbs him. He also realizes how important the cheerful singing of the canary had been to his mother's otherwise troubled existence and how important the companionship of the dog Shagitz had been to the old, decrepit Mrs. Horowitz whose only companion was the Angel of Death. Both animals are eventually replaced but Davey still lives with his guilt and remorse.

Davey is a very gentle soul; he does not want to hurt anybody or be hurt by life itself. Thus his intense preoccupation with and fear of "accidents"--those unfortunate incidents that cause people unwarranted pain and anguish--and his need to create for himself a fantasy world of safety and peacefulness under his milky white sheets. He actually prefers being ill because then he can slip into his quietly fabricated world of milky white sheets and a comforting imagination where dogs are not killed by cars and canaries fly back through windows. He creates a magical place of calm and security for himself:

> Then I pulled the sheet over my head and lay with my lips gently touching the cool smooth cottony material. I licked at it with my tongue and opened my eyes. The dresser lamp had

> been left on. I saw its light milky whiteness through the sheet. This was my quiet world. I had made this world. There were no accidents in this world. I could not understand the world outside ... It seemed a terrible world. God's world, and I liked my cool white sheet world ... Why did I need my father's world when I had my own world? (p. 69)

Although Davey participates in wordly affairs, his life is largely internal and richly imaginative. He sees, hears and imagines things inside himself. He uses these rich internal experiences to create a more "potent" self. He would like to help suffering Jews as his father does, but as an otherwise pale and sickly child he cannot accomplish this. However, as the Golem of Prague, an imaginary figure invested with magical powers, he can. Anytime Davey feels powerless and unable to help others he conjures up the image of the Golem of Prague and sends him on various missions. Eventually the Golem of Prague wears his face. His alter ego becomes himself.

When the "missions" are not too vast or extraordinary Davey does what he can to help. He is amazingly non-egocentric and empathetic for a young child. Even though he is frightened of Mrs. Horowitz he goes to visit her knowing that this makes her happy. When his little brother Alex feels distraught over the family state of affairs Davey offers to oil his bike and pacifies his fears. He cares about other people deeply and appears to be more sensitive to their needs than his own. He apologizes to his father for being ill because he does not want to add to the family burdens during the Depression. His good

friend Tony has been issued a warning from Eddie K. that if he continues to play with Davey, Eddie will not play with him. Davey is concerned about Tony's welfare and says to him in regard to Eddie: "I hope he won't get angry at you Tony. I hope he won't stop being your friend" (p. 106). Eddie and his cousin gang up on Davey and physically assault him in the woods. In his defense, Davey kicks his foot out and hits one of the boys in the face. He is more frightened about having hurt one of them than concerned with his own pain and humiliation. Intuitively, Davey picks up what others are feeling. He knows that when he asks his father about money matters during the Depression he has "wounded him terribly" (p. 204) and that when he mentions his Uncle David to his mother (Ruth's first husband) he has somehow "touched the secret pool of sorrow within her" (p. 150).

Emotionally Davey is sensitive and complex. He is capable of watching a movie and feeling funny and sad at the same time. Lying in bed one night he feels the stirrings of a "benign force" and smiles deeply to himself" (p. 141). He experiences many moments of fear and dread in relation to this "accident-world" and stories or incidents of violence and abuse upset him deeply. It is very difficult for him to comprehend intense hate or anger. He says:

> Was that what people meant by hate, being angry at something or somebody so much that you needed to hit somebody? I had never had that feeling, not even about being ill. I did not want to hit anybody because I was ill all of the time. (p. 70)

Davey's intellectual ability and curiosity far surpass that of other little boys his own age. He teaches himself to read English from old comic books left in trash cans, and by the time he enters school he is well versed in both the English and Hebrew alphabets. Teachers do not know what to do with his voracious appetite for learning and supply him with additional material to supplement his daily quota of reading. His classmates tease him mercilessly and are frightened of his cleverness and astonishing ability. Even his father is sometimes threatened by and contemptuous of Davey's intelligence: Davey reminds him too much of his younger brother David, a man of superior intellect who "did not care what precious ideas he threw aside once he thought them untrue ... He was gentle in everything except the use of his mind." Max believed it was "as much a curse to be born with too much brains as too little" (p. 423).

Davey certainly does not suffer from "too little" brains. He makes some very powerful observations and thinks some very complex, intriguing thoughts for a young school-age boy. During the Depression he witnesses the pain and apathy of the homeless and jobless people on the streets of New York. He says to his father:

> I hate it, Papa. There are so many dead people everywhere. How can God do such a thing? I see them from the trolley, Papa. Dead people on the street corners. Don't become a dead person, Papa. (p. 218)

He understands that "death" does not only refer to physical death but it can also apply to spiritual and emotional deprivation as well.

He tries to comprehend the difference between Good and Evil. Does it make any difference if one is "good" or "bad"? Does God reward one and punish the other? He sees an old lady evicted from her apartment surrounded by her furniture, freezing in the cold winter weather and wonders if life or God is treating her this way because she is evil:

> Evil. It had a queer sound to it in English. It seemed a wet, slimy word. The Hebrew word was harsher. Rasha. An Evil man. Rishus. Evil. How could it possibly make a difference? (p. 212)

One day he notices his parents' picture on the wall and makes the following insightful observation:

> It's like freezing someone, I thought. People do things and think thoughts before and after a picture is taken; but the picture freezes them and we have to try to know what they thought about and did before and after the picture. (p. 112)

Davey ponders the meaning of his own existence. He attempts to grasp the fact that he is alive because his Uncle David is dead:

> The idea seemed to penetrate through me and double back and come through me again, and still I could not grasp it. I was alive because goyim had killed my uncle ... What did it mean that if someone had not died I would not be alive? (p. 312)

Contradictions in life pique Davey's interest. He wants to know how his uncle who is essentially a very gentle man could suddenly turn raging, and how his father who is mostly "stern and stiff" could break out delightedly in laughter while viewing a movie. He sees the beautifully sculptured face of the Virgin Mary and wonders how a face full of

so much compassion and grace could be worshipped by a heart consumed with so much hate (this referring to the Catholic Eddie Kulanski who despises Jews).

Davey is a truth-seeker. He hungers for the truth. He insists upon it. As a young boy the "photograph" incident is evidence of his exceptional persistence in pursuing the truth. All adults around him deny the existence of the photograph; yet, he relentlessly affirms its existence. In school if there is a passage he cannot understand, he ponders over it laboriously and asks questions until he is satisfied with the answer given. He is not content with "partial" truths. He seeks the "entire" truth.

In this spirit he undertakes the study of scientific Bible criticism. He wants to know the whole truth about his beloved Torah and its beginnings. In order to do this he must study books written by Christian and secular Jewish scholars. His parents and friends are appalled by this obvious indiscretion and apparent rebelliousness, however, Davey resolutely maintains his position. He makes it clear to his parents that he is not studying Bible criticism in order to destroy ideas of the Torah, but in actual fact to defend it. He says to his father: "Papa, some Jews fight with guns, other Jews fight with words" (p. 358) and David will fight the battle of anti-semitism, in his way, with words.

He realizes it is a great risk for him to stray from the beaten path. He says to his great teacher Rav Sharfman: "I could lose everything" (p. 403). There was comfort in studying the Torah as it had been

studied by past generations and "only terror in the thought of striking out alone beyond the boundaries of the past" (p. 385). But strike out alone he must.

Davey is fiercely autonomous. When his mother attempts to dissuade him from the path he has taken, he vehemently replies: "Mama. I'm going to read what I want to read. No one will stop me from reading" (p. 376). He does not want to be reminded of the painful fights his father and his Uncle David had over their philosophical differences. He pleads with his mother: "Please, Mama. Please. I don't want ghosts. All my life I've had ghosts" (p. 376). He no longer wants to live in his Uncle's shadows. He proclaims with fiery intensity: "I am David. Everyone has a different picture of me or wants me to be another Uncle David. But I want to be my own David" (p. 311).

To others he may be regarded as an impossible renegage or heretic, but to himself he is finally his "own David."

All of his internal struggles and experiences help David mature emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. They call forth his full potential as a human being. They are the raw material for his transformation, the source of his internal power and authenticity. They encourage him to be who he truly "ought to be."

Max Lurie

Max Lurie acts as a foil to his son Davey. While Davey is described as emotionally sensitive, physically thin and frail, and intellectually very acute, Max is depicted as solid and thick and oft times

brutish. Crude words like "bastard," "lump of cow," and "stinking witch" come easily from his mouth. Even his name "Max" when uttered sounds like a monosyllabic grunt, as opposed to Davey's full name--"David"--which has a soft, silken quality about it.

Max is most at ease in the physical world. He is described as being short, stocky, with "thick shoulders" and a "muscular frame" (p. 18). His countenance is formed by squarish features and firm lines. He looks stiff and stern most of the time, not somebody to be easily brushed aside. Max is an excellent sportsman, riding horses with a sense of mastery and grace, and playing soccer with amazing skill and dexterity. He runs "lightly and effortlessly," gliding "over the ground with the kind of ease" of animals roaming about their pens and cages in the zoo (p. 86). He is well respected and admired by his friends and they bestow the ultimate compliment upon him by telling him that he plays like a "goy"--fierce and unrelenting (p. 90).

As a Real Estate man Max handles his business affairs as adroitly as he handles a ball on the soccer field. His friends call him a "sharpshooter and a financial wizard" (p. 73). Not only does he amply provide for his family, but he also raises money to support other Jews in need of assistance. Max is a man of duty; he believes in helping his fellow man. Max sees the world as "firm and fixed" with everything having its place and task assigned (p. 34). This world view gives him great peace and comfort as Max is a man who likes to be in control of his own fate.

As organizer of the Am Kedoshim society, an organization committed to helping Jews fight back, Max is a very strong and charismatic leader. Max is a man of action, a fighter. His motto is: "If someone comes to kill you, kill him first ... Do not become a saint and do not worry about anyone else. Kill him" (p. 118). "Enough Jewish blood has been spilled in this world" (p. 119).

For the longest time his biggest foe is the "goy" who hates the Jew. This is a concrete, tangible enemy and relatively easy for Max to fight. However, when the Depression comes, an enemy less tangible and frighteningly elusive rears its ugly head. Max cannot stand to be defeated. He is a doer, not a thinker, and as he watches the funds of the Am Kedoshim society slowly deplete, he no longer knows what action to take. He laments to his wife Ruth: "I cannot understand it. What has happened? Nothing I do seems to help" (p. 228). Max has never experienced such a disillusioning situation where he cannot make a discernible difference. His wife says of him:

> In many ways it was easier for him in the war than it is now. He's a man and in the war there were things a man could do. And he did them well ... there were Jews who had to be helped and he had ways to help them. But now? (p. 230)

Max crumbles under the heavy weight of the Depression. His formerly "firm and fixed" world has disintegrated and Max no longer knows how to occupy himself. His office is like a "tomb" (p. 217); he has no more work and no more meetings to go to at night. He becomes increasingly irritable and angry and even his inner hostility begins to

feel futile.

Finally he loses his physical strength and emotional balance and suffers a nervous breakdown. He sleeps a lot and is generally confused and bewildered. He needs an idea. Desperately, he searches inside himself for an idea, where he could begin to build again, slowly, piece by piece over time. He says to his wife: "It has to be something small, something I will want to do, something I can build with, something that will hurt no one if it fails" (p. 251).

Eventually Max heals and finds an idea: he becomes a simple watchmaker. Davey observes him one day and wonders if there is not a striking similarity between taking apart machine guns and taking apart watches. This occupation fits with Max's mechanistic world view--he likes things to work with precision and accuracy.

Max firmly believes in social responsibility and paying one's debts. He feels that he owes the dead an obligation especially his dead younger brother David:

> When two people believe in the same thing and
> fight for it and one dies and the other lives--
> what a debt he owes ... I try to pay my debts ...
> I will owe my little brother nothing. (p. 359)

This is the relentless fervour that he brings to the Am Kedoshim society. His brother, a great philosopher and intellectual planted the idea firmly in his mind: Jews must help Jews fight back and from this idea Max energetically and passionately created an organization that would fulfill this dream. He also married his dead brother's wife

(although he loved her very much) out of duty. And now out of duty once again, he wishes to financially support David in his studies even though he disagrees with the path he is taking.

Max vindicates himself for all the wrongs he might have committed in his life by saying to David in a final statement: "I did my best" (p. 425) and from a man of duty these words are an honourable expression of his deepest integrity.

COMMON THEMES

There are several common themes interwoven in all three books - The Chosen, My Name is Asher Lev, and In the Beginning.

One message that is emphasized over and over again is that a Jewish life is precious. Anything that can be done to save a Jewish life or promote the study of the Torah is considered to be of utmost importance. David Malter, in The Chosen, a high school teacher by vocation, dedicates himself to raising the consciousness of American Jewry and establishing a State of Israel. He accomplishes this by writing articles, making important speeches and raising funds. Aryeh, in My Name is Asher Lev, travels all over the world for the Rebbe making the Torah accessible to Jewish communities. Max Lurie, in In the Beginning, organizes a society committed to arming Jews against antagonistic forces.

Anti-semitism, as it appears in its many different forms, is an insidious threat to Jewish existence. It is a battle that is fought in

different ways by each of the characters. David Malter is an intellectual: he uses the "word" as a weapon in his speeches and articles to help sustain Jewish life. Reb Saunders believes in piety and prayer, and nurturing the heart and soul. Max Lurie believes in arming oneself against attack. His son, David, chooses to become a Bible scholar in order to defend the Torah from erroneous misconceptions perpetrated by Christian theologians.

Although each of the above characters believes in the existence and sanctity of God, they also believe that man must take the first step towards a responsible relationship with God. After the slaughter of six million Jews, David Malter believes "we cannot wait for God" (p. 182); American Jews must begin to reconstruct what they have tragically lost. In answer to the question of how man can establish a better relationship with God, Aryeh submits the following explanation:

> In order for there to be a connection between man and the Master of the Universe, there must first be an opening, a passageway, even a passageway as small as the eye of a needle. But man must make the opening by himself; man must take the beginning step. Then the Master of the Universe will move in, as it were, and widen the passageway.
>
> (My Name is Asher Lev, p. 107)

Even Max who harbours a cynical approach to God teaches his son Davey, that "we are partners with God, and "we have to work hard to make it a good world" (In the Beginning, p. 68).

Hard work brings meaning to life and a worthy task once under-

taken must be completed. These are major principles that structure the lives of many of the characters. When David Malter's son, Reuven, scolds him for working too hard and not taking proper care of himself, he replies: "A life filled with meaning is worthy of rest. I want to be worthy of rest when I am no longer here" (The Chosen, p. 205). He explains to Reuven that it is man's responsibility to make his life meaningful. He elaborates his philosophy in the following passage:

> There is so much pain in the world. What does it mean to have to suffer so much if our lives are nothing more than the blink of an eye? ... I learned a long time ago, Reuven, that a blink of an eye in itself is nothing. But the eye that blinks that is something. A span of life is nothing. But the man who lives than span, he is something. He can fill that tiny span with meaning, so its quality is immeasurable though its quantity may be insignificant. Do you understand what I am saying? A man must fill his life with meaning, meaning is not automatically given to life. It is hard to work to fill one's life with meaning.
>
> (The Chosen, p. 204-205)

Rivkeh fills her life with meaning, by completing her brother's work after he dies in a car accident. This helps her recover from her tragic loss. Her husband, Aryeh, feels compelled to continue his father's work as emissary to the Rebbe and derives immense fulfillment from this occupation. Max fervently believes he must continue to fight for the idea that his younger brother instilled in his mind: Jews must fight for Jews against the lash of anti-semitism.

The sons, Danny, Asher, and Davey, have similar values in

common with their parents. They too believe in hard work and helping others. However, they surpass their biological and socially determined conditioning in search for their ideals. In order to meet their goals they must step beyond the boundaries of traditional Judaism and venture out on their own.

The development of the Jewish soul is another pervasive theme that seeks expression through the characters. Danny develops into a sensitive, autonomous human being through his patient, yet harrowing guide of "silence." Asher evolves through the painful struggles he endures related to his art. And Davey matures developmentally through his experiences as a sickly child and a truth-seeker. None of these children are shielded from pain and sorrow in life. Their experiences fraught with internal struggle and conflict provide the foundation for their later development as autonomous, authentic human beings. With exquisite sensitivity, Potok seems to say that it is okay to feel pain in oneself and others. Suffering has a redeeming quality: we grow from it. We become better human beings and ultimately make this a more beautiful, harmonious world to live in.

CHAIM POTOK, THE WRITER

Distinguished author of five novels, numerous articles and reviews, and more recently an awesome work on the history of Judaism, Chaim Potok was born in 1929, in the Bronx, New York. His parents were Orthodox Jewish and he was raised in a very tradi-

tional environment: his mother was a direct descendant from one of the great Hasidic dynasties.

As the protaganists in his books, Potok, too clashed with his environment in pursuit of his ideal. He wanted to be a writer since he was fourteen. Similar to Asher Lev he felt he had a "calling" in life to pursue his artistic ability and towards this end he stayed up nights writing. Potok was an excellent Talmud student, but like Danny Saunders he felt compelled to investigate secular literature. In fact he graduated from the Yeshiva University, in 1950, with a B.A. in English Literature.

By entering the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, and being ordained as a rabbi (1954) he expanded his awareness of other expressions of Jewish tradition. In spite of his deep immersion in Jewish thought, he remained attracted to Western culture and received his doctorate in philosophy from the University of Pennsylvania in 1965.

Potok still struggles with the conflict of being a rabbi and a writer. "While the tension is exhausting," he says softly, "it is fuel for me. Without it, I would have nothing to say."

CHAPTER II

THE THEORY OF POSITIVE DISINTEGRATION

INTRODUCTION

Dabrowski, The Man and the Theory

Dr. Kazimierz Dabrowski, born in Poland, in 1902 was a man of many gifts and talents. Aside from his significant contributions in the fields of psychology and psychiatry, he enjoyed writing poetry and drama, played the violin and piano, and composed pieces of music. Dabrowski received his first degree, an M.A. in Philosophy and Comparative Literature in Poznam, 1923. His interests shifted to medicine, particularly neurophysiology, and he received an M.D. in Geneva, in 1929. Questions surrounding the subjects of death, suicide, and immortality concerned Dabrowski deeply. He wrote a doctoral dissertation on the Psychological Condition of Suicide (1929).

In his medical practice, Dabrowski saw many patients who suffered from psychosomatic symptoms. He thus felt the need to acquire more knowledge in the area of mental health. Towards this end he studied psychoanalysis in Vienna and trained in clinical psychology and child psychiatry in Paris and Boston. Dabrowski was invited by the Minister of Social Affairs and Health to organize mental health in Poland. Between the years of 1935 and 1948 he was Director of the Polish State Mental Hygiene Institute and the Institute for Mental

Hygiene in Warsaw. As a result of the German occupation his institute was closed for a period of time and Dabrowski himself was imprisoned. Near Warsaw, however, in a secluded setting, scientific research and clinical work involving children and youth continued.

In 1965, at the age of sixty-five, Dabrowski came to the University of Alberta as a Visting Professor of Psychology. He was associated with the university for thirteen years and busied himself\teaching, researching and writing.

Dabrowski worked very hard and was extremely devoted to his work and his ideals. He wrote numerous books and articles (many still remain unpublished) addressing issues and problems in the area of mental health. The two articles: The Psychological Basis of Self-Mutilation (1937) and Types of Increased Psychic Excitability (1938) contain the seeds of his theory of Positive Disintegration.

In these articles characteristics such as extreme anxiety, nervousness, deep conflict and frustration were regarded as positive elements in one's development as a human being. Rather than considering these symptoms as indicative of "mental illness," Dabrowski believed that they were, in fact, essential to one's personal evolution. He saw the "psychoneurotic" as a very sensitive, creative individual with potential for greatness, rather than a "sick" individual in need of a cure. In his book Psychoneurosis is Not an Illness (1972) Dabrowski describes the symptoms of many eminent persons such as Lincoln, Kafka and Kierkegaard in detailed accounts.

The following is a summary of Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration with emphasis on the notions of transcendence and transformation.

THE THEORY OF POSITIVE DISINTEGRATION

The theory of Positive Disintegration postulated by Dr. Kazimierz Dabrowski, rests on the notion that conflict and frustration are instrumental to one's positive growth and higher development. Dabrowski's perspective is grounded in the fulfillment-perfection model of personality theory (Maddi, 1977). This version suggests that fulfillment is sought through one's ideal of self-perfection. Maddi declares: "... in the perfection version, the force is ... the tendency to strive for that which will make life ideal or complete ..." (p. 78). Dabrowski's model is also spiritually and existentially based: man is capable of making his own choices, and he relies on the deepest part of himself.

In Dabrowski's theory of Positive Disintegration emphasis is placed on emotional development. Unlike cognitive-based psychological theories Dabrowski believes that emotions play a major directive role in everyday living. He asserts "that the emotional sphere at every level of development is the decisive factor that determines and controls human activity" and that the "human intellect does not act independently of higher emotions" (Dabrowski, Kawczak, & Piechowski, 1970, p. 112). He does not believe that emotions should be subdued or invalidated by the dictates of reason; rather he believes that emotions

can transform and become more refined through higher development.

Dabrowski outlines five levels of human development: "Each level is described as a qualitatively distinct developmental structure ... the structure of a lower level is replaced by the structure of a higher one" (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977a, p. 19). In this area, Dabrowski was greatly influenced by John Hughlings Jackson who in his three lectures on the Evolution and Dissolution of the Nervous System (1884) suggested a biological hierarchy in the nervous system. He believed that in its evolution there was a passage from the most simple to the more complex, and from the most automatic to the more voluntary.

This introduces the concept of multilevelness which is a unique and integral part of Dabrowski's theory. Lower levels of mental functioning are controlled or inhibited by higher levels of development. There is a movement from unilevel to multilevel forms of development and reality, a transition from external to internal locus of control, and a movement from involuntary, reflexive behaviour to autonomous, reflective behaviour. Egocentrism transforms to allocentrism and conformity to societal norms transforms to authenticity of one's personality ideal. The individual capable of higher development moves from the first level of Primary Integration which is the least differentiated towards the highest level of Secondary Integration which is the most evolved. The process of Positive Disintegration makes this transformation possible.

Each level is characterized by the presence or absence of "intra-

psychic dispositional traits" called dynamisms (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977a, p. 37). As the word dynamism suggests these are dynamic forces that shape or influence a person's development.

At the first level of Primary Integration, there is an absence of developmental structures. Dabrowski defines this level as "an integration of mental functions, subordinated to primitive drives" (Dabrowski, Kawczak, & Piechowski, 1970, p. 176). The individual at this level is first and foremost self-seeking. He is egocentric and aggressive, narrowly focused on his needs and desires. Responses to stimuli are automatic and reflexive. There is little reflection and hesitation. Inner conflict does not take place; the enemy is "out there."

This level is characterized by narrowness of thought and rigidity of behaviour. It is a tightly organized structure confined by lower levels of consciousness. There is little or no semblance of introspection, self-reflection, or moral concern. A person at the extreme end of this continuum would be considered "psychopathic"--cold and calculating, ruthless, abusive and self-seeking. At the milder end of the continuum, a Level I person could conceivably fit into the broad category of "normalcy" as society sees it. This person adheres to the rules and constraints of his society and culture. He follows the "established path." He does not reflect upon his position in life, or the meaning of his life. Above all, he desires acceptance from his neighbours and colleagues. He may be held in high esteem by others; he may advance professionally and socially but he does not develop

spiritually and emotionally. He lacks the capacity to transform. He remains locked in a set pattern of thinking and behaving. Something in his life might disturb him momentarily causing temporary grief and disintegration, but he does not emerge out of this stressful time with any new perspective on life. In fact he frequently hangs onto his former patterns with greater tenacity. Dabrowski would say that he lacks the capacity to reflect upon or consider his old behaviour patterns, thoughts and attitudes in such a way as to discard those that are not conducive to a meaningful and constructive existence, and acquire new patterns that are. In Dabrowski's terms he lacks the developmental instinct "to evolve from lower to higher levels of personality" (Dabrowski, 1964, p. XIV).

In an individual with developmental potential, a crisis will be an opportunity for growth. This person will not re-establish himself back into his former life patterns and level of Primary Integration. He will move onto the second level of Unilevel Disintegration where the process of disintegration is experienced. His tightly rigidified ways of thinking and behaving begin to loosen and fragment and this process allows for further development to take place. A person at this level is fraught with emotional ambivalence. One minute he feels happy, the next minute he feels sad. His physical and mental condition is in a state of precarious imbalance. Tension and stress abound. This is a painful and confusing time for the individual as he is vulnerable to intense and fluctuating mood swings. He feels out of control driven by a "multi-

plicity of wills" (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977a, p. 42).

An individual at this level is still largely egocentric, preoccupied with his various ambivalences and ambitendencies. He is not conscious of how his presence and behaviour affects others. His tendency is still to be in service of "self." Moral responsibility to his fellowman is, therefore, rather low. He is less concerned with others in a genuine and empathetic manner, and more concerned with their perceptions of him. Feelings of guilt are more a demonstration of "how bad I am" rather than how I can rectify this situation and act responsibly towards another. Values are still socially determined and sometimes resisted as part of one's ambivalent and rebellious nature, but not transformed or adopted as one's personal set of values. Inner conflicts begin to appear at this stage but they are rarely transformative in nature; rather they manifest themselves externally as delusions, hallucinations and psychosomatic disorders. Self-reflection and personal insight are still markedly low. If a person is creatively inclined at this level it is usually "impulsive, spontaneous, and isolated from personality development" (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977a, p. 42). Creativity is rarely the result of self-awareness and inner reflection. It is simply "art for art's sake" devoid of ultimate feeling and value.

This level is called <u>unilevel</u> because there is a feeling of strained immobility. A person's consciousness is fairly limited to self; he views life from a narrow perspective. Life is seen from and lived on one plane of reality only. As a person emerges from Level II to Level

III there is a sense of release. This is analogous to a rocketship that takes off with a tremendous burst of energy and leaves part of itself behind. The person approaching Level III channels his energy upwards with a sudden thrust--hence the name Spontaneous Multilevel Disintegration--leaving lower forms of himself behind in pursuit of his personality ideal.

Just as Level II is characterized by deep ambivalences or conflicts that are horizontal in nature, so Level III is characterized by intense evaluations of oneself or conflicts that are vertical in nature. There is a constant tension between "what is" and "what ought to be," a definite conflict between "lower" and "higher" forms of being, and "lower" and "higher" values.

The third level of Spontaneous Multilevel Disintegration constitutes the emergence of an autonomous hierarchy of values. The person at this level becomes more inner-directed. There is a gradual movement towards autonomy and self-definition. The individual at this level begins to move beyond his biological and social conditioning towards self-determination although this process does not complete itself until the fourth level. He struggles deeply with the discrepancy of "who he is now" and "who he ought to be."

The dynamisms experienced at this level are as follows:

1) Astonishment with Oneself - surprise and shock with "what is," regarding oneself and the state of the world.

2) Dissatisfaction with Oneself - feelings of discontent, anger and

frustration with oneself.

3) Inferiority Toward Oneself - strong feelings of inadequacy, a deep realization of the discrepancy between "what is", and "what ought to be."

4) Disquietude with Oneself - feelings of fear and anxiety as one attempts self-evaluation, strong emotional component present marked by general unease with oneself.

5) Hierarchization - the development of a critical attitude towards oneself, sorting out higher and lower levels of being, the emergence of a hierarchical value system.

6) Feelings of Shame - feeling conscious of one's moral deficiencies in the face of others, this particular sensitivity is more external than internal.

7) Feelings of Guilt - internal shame and embarrassment, a betrayal of one's hierarchy of values.

8) Positive Maladjustment - a protest to and a lack of adjustment to "what is" while consciously adjusting to "what ought to be."

Creativity at this level is marked by a deep understanding of the human drama--the agony and the ecstasy of human existence. A person at this level empathizes deeply with the struggles of human kind and demonstrates this in his art. His artistic endeavours become a true expression of the deepest part of himself.

The individual at this level moves away from his "self-imprisonment" towards caring for others in a deep and loving manner. He

appreciates differences amongst human beings and accepts their genuine uniqueness. Working towards authenticity in himself, he encourages others to be themselves as well. He is insightful and self-aware.

As this individual slowly discards lower forms of being for higher forms, a sense of internal order and direction take control of his life. He now enters Dabrowski's fourth level of development called Directed Multilevel Disintegration. Disintegration of old structures, rigid patterns and lower forms of being continues to take place, but there is now a conscious sense of direction from one's inner self activating the process. The "disposing and directing centre" (DDC) of the individual is operating at a very high level of integration. It is guiding all behaviour and its expression. A person at this level is no longer bound by biological and social constrictions - Dabrowski's first and second factors; the "third factor" now becomes operational. It consists of autonomous, conscious forces based on a person's inner hierarchy of values. This particular value system now influences or dictates the choices a person will make in life. He becomes a self-determined man, with a definite goal in mind. When he does experience inner conflict it is because he is not "there" yet. Inner conflict is resolved by taking positive strides towards his "personality ideal."

The dynanism of "subject-object in oneself" is apparent at the fourth level. This means that the person is able to figuratively stand outside of himself and make critical observations of his thoughts,

feelings and behaviours. Self-reflection and introspection come naturally to him at this stage. He evaluates himself in terms of his progress towards his ideal. His psychic energy is focused upon self-perfection. Self-perfection at this level is not narrow or rigid pertaining to only one aspect of self; instead it is attributed to the whole person and indicates a transcendence of biological and psychological type.

This person is capable of experiencing deep sudden inner changes that influence his external behaviours. He is able to transcend his age limitations and physical infirmities and continue to live a rich and vibrant life. He is also able to transcend his psychological type so that if he is basically shy and introverted, he may become more extroverted, or if he is prone to excessive fear and anxiety he may become more self-assured and confident. This person transcends "what he is" to become "what he ought to be." An "inner psychic transformation" has taken place.

As there is so much more reliance on internal messages than external forces, the Level IV person is able to engage in "autopsychotherapy" and "education of oneself" two dynamisms that enrich and strengthen his personality ideal. This person is able to draw upon his rich inner resources to heal and educate himself. Again there is emphasis on inner direction rather than popular "gurus" to lead the way.

Expressions of creativity at this level deal with matters of universal consequence and morality. The fourth level person empathizes with human beings on a very deep level; he is sensitive to the feelings

and conditions of the painful and oppressed. He participates in their suffering: helping others becomes a way of helping himself.

Inner conflicts at this stage are dealt with by taking positive action. These conflicts are usually existential and transcendental in nature dealing with the actualization of one's personality ideal. There is a sense of dynamic, directed movement at this stage, a focused energy channelled towards one's ideal.

As a person approaches Level V which Dabrowski terms Secondary Integration he is achieving the level of "Personality." Dabrowski does not believe that a person has a "personality" until this level. By personality he is referring to someone who is "self-aware, self-chosen, and self-affirmed" (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977a, p. 53). Personality is composed of an individual and common essence. Individual refers to a person's unique gifts and talents while "common" refers to those characteristics and values shared universally by accelerated developers.

At Level V there is a sense of harmony and unification. The process of disintegration has resulted in the formation of a diverse and comprehensive structure capable of guiding a person on to further development and achievement.

All dynamisms are subsumed under the influence of the personality ideal. There is a crucial sense of responsibility towards others and a desire to commit oneself to the highest ideals possible - universal love and empathy. Relationships take on an <u>I and Thou</u> quality. There

is the highest respect, love and recognition of the "other" in oneself. There is a sense of being divorced from one's little "self" and united with the highest "Self" in one's being. A person at this level is truly authentic and autonomous in the way he thinks, feels and lives his life. He is a truly integrated being.

Just as the idea of multilevelness is unique to Dabrowski's theory of Positive Disintegration, so is his notion of "overexcitability." This refers to the "consistent tendency to overreact ... over and above average intensity, duration and frequency" (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977a, p. 31). It is only when these expressions of psychic excitability are beyond what is considered normal do they make a significant contribution to one's evolution. Many people would consider this notion of overexcitability as detrimental to one's overall development; however, just as Dabrowski believes that disintegration can be positive and creative potential for higher development, so he believes that this tendency to overreact is a necessary ingredient for psychic transformation.

Dabrowski (1959) based his distinctions of five forms of overexcitability on 433 examples identified in subjects participating in his research. These five different forms--psychomotor, sensual, imaginational, intellectual and emotional--correspond to different modes of processing information. They are similar to channels of information flow.

Most people have preferential modes of processing and commu-

nicating their experiences. For example, a person who is emotionally overexcitable will detect the emotional tone of a speech before the person whose primary overexcitability is intellectual. Dabrowski maintains that a person can have more than one preferred overexcitability. In fact he would say that the more one has, the more potential there is for accelerated development. This is due to the fact that the more channels one has access to, the more abundant and diverse the information flowing through will be. This in turn creates greater conflict and dissonance which are both proponents for positive disintegration and higher development.

Dabrowski views these overexcitabilities arranged in hierarchical fashion with the psychomotor mode being the least significant to higher development and emotional overexcitability being the most essential. In order for higher levels of development to evolve, imaginational, intellectual and emotional overexcitabilities must be present.

The following is a description of the five forms of overexcitability and their manifestation in individuals:

1. PSYCHOMOTOR: this refers to an "organic excess of energy" (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977a, p. 33), restlessness, intense activity and movement. There is a sense of compulsiveness that characterizes this overexcitability. If accompanied by emotional excitement this overexcitability is "converted into gesticulation, pacing, throwing objects, wanderlust, rapid talk, chain smoking" (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977a, p. 33). At higher levels of

development this overexcitability is transformed into positive action towards one's personality ideal. For example, an individual might use his excess physical energy to organize a march or demonstration of universal appeal, such as human rights.

2. SENSUAL: this refers to an overindulgence in sensory and sensual excitation. This may be manifested as a need for excessive comfort, luxury or material acquisitions. Emphasis is placed on the material rather than the spiritual life. If accompanied by emotional tension this overexcitability may be converted into excessive oral (i.e. drug and alcohol abuse, overeating) or sexual stimululation. At higher levels of development primitive forms of sensuality are transformed into a deeper appreciation of life. One wants to touch life and be touched by it.

3. IMAGINATIONAL - this refers to a person's ability to fantasize creatively and see things in terms of images and associations. This person is inventive and suggestible and sees things in terms of symbols. His emotional tension is converted into a rich and creative dream world. In its highest form imaginational overexcitability is interwoven with intellectual and emotional overexcitability and is directed towards one's personality ideal. Innovativeness and creativity is utilized to transform one's energy towards the highest universal values.

4. INTELLECTUAL - this refers to a person's persistent search for the Truth. It manifests itself in probing questions, a rever-

ence for logic and analysis, and thinking in conceptual terms. This person is the inveterate "question asker": he wants to know the how and why of things. Within the concept of multilevelness, intellectual overexcitability is used to understand the meaning of life and human behaviour. One uses his excess intellectual ability towards the refinement of his personality ideal. He becomes increasingly self-aware and intuitive. He relies on the deepest part of himself, his deep-seated intelligence, to make his choices in life.

5. EMOTIONAL - regarded as the "sine qua non" ingredient for higher development. This overexcitability is always exhibited within the context of a relationship: the individual is excessively emotional about something or someone. In its negative aspects the individual is continually plagued by feelings of fear, dread and anxiety. He is perpetually lonely. He is Camus' "L' Etranger." He has a great need for exclusive relationships; there is a great fear in experiencing the unknown; he exhibits difficulty in adjusting to new environments. In its most positive sense, the deeply emotional individual is extremely sensitive and empathetic and can relate to individuals with a great deal of love and understanding. The same vessel inside of himself that has been hollowed out by pain has the same capacity to hold deep joy. He is able to experience a deep sense of peace and harmony. At the highest levels emotional overexcitability is associated with

accelerated development. Emotions pertain less to one specific aspect of life and become more broad and refined. There is evidence of a deep respect and empathy for all living things. One rises above the "self" and is emotionally involved with things of a universal nature.

As has been mentioned previously the overexcitabilities and dynamisms constitute the raw material for positive disintegration and higher development to take place. Out of this massive pool of psychic energy the dynamisms are the more refined intra-psychic structures that determine positive and higher transformation. For the remainder of this chapter I would like to now focus on the ideas of transcendence and transformation. There are three dynamisms that play a prominent role in this process: autonomy, authentism, and inner psychic transformation. The following is an elaboration of these three dynamisms:

1. Autonomy: In order for one to transcend a rudimentary structure, a unilevel form of existence, disintegration of this level must take place. For this reason conflict and frustration are essential to Dabrowski's theory. The real thrust in one's development occurs, however, when one can rise above one's ambivalences and ambitendencies. A new structure is then achieved, a new organization and integration of thought, feeling and behaviour. The dynamism of autonomy is very important in shaping one's transformation and personality ideal. It provides the thrust for a person to make his own choices, to truly believe in himself and

be a self-determined, self-chosen man. He rises above life's mendacities and ambiguities; he is no longer bound by biological and sociological restrictions. He is a free man, free to be his "real" self. This brings us to the second dynamism of Authentism.

2. Authentism: The individual is not only able to be himself, he must be himself. The energy he used in previous levels to work out his conflicts, ambivalences and ambitendencies is now focused on developing his own person. Kierkegaard once said that the deepest despair a man could experience was to be other than himself. The individual at this level has left his despair behind. He transcends the "shoulds" and "oughts" he was raised with. He is capable of deeply evaluating and understanding himself. He knows what he wants. He knows who he is. Growth and development do not cease at this point. They remain focused on one's personality ideal becoming ever more refined and infinite in outlook. The individual is not only true to one aspect of himself, but he is authentic in all aspects of himself and his relations to the world. There is an inner and an outer harmony. He is congruent with his "real" self. He "is" what he "ought to be."

3. Inner Psychic Transformation: This refers to the transformation that the individual experiences in his inner psychic milieu in order to transcend his biological and psychological type. His growth is not arrested by physical infirmity and deterioration. This person continues to be creative and inventive throughout his old age.

> Psychologically, whatever aspect of himself still hampers his growth or impedes his progress is transcended and replaced by more constructive ways of being. Whatever is needed to round out his character is added or released from his inner resources. He becomes "who he ought to be." He is truly a transformed man. Dabrowski would call this individual a person of "great power" and "great peace."

In this chapter I have outlined the basic elements of Dabrowski's theory of Positive Disintegration. In the following chapter I have used the interview format with an expert in his theory--Dr. Marlene Rankel--to elucidate the finer points of his perspective as they pertain to the development of the major characters described in Potok's three books.

CHAPTER III

CONVERSATIONS WITH MARLENE RANKEL

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Dabrowski and Dr. Marlene Rankel were close friends and professional associates over a span of ten years, from 1968-1978. Dabrowski accepted Marlene as an expert in his Theory and invited her to present papers at three of his four International Conferences (1970, 1980, and 1982). She collaborated with him on various research projects, books and papers, including a three year research project designed empirically to validate some of his tests.

Dabrowski's first language was Polish and he wrote most of his papers and books in that language. He depended on other people who knew English and Polish to translate these works. Although these translators had a good grasp of both languages, they did not necessarily have a thorough understanding of the theory. Dabrowski, therefore, relied upon Marlene for fluent knowledge of the English language along with her knowledge and understanding of the Theory of Positive Disintegration to help him refine his numerous books and publications, many of which still remain in the form of unpublished manuscripts.

Dr. Marlene Rankel is presently a clinical psychologist at the Runaway Project, an agency that counsels runaway adolescents and

their families.

The following conversations took place on two occasions: November 8 and November 15, 1982, in her office. With the consent of Dr. Rankel, the author has taken the liberty to edit the material.

Part I

D. Marlene, I would like to begin with you telling me how you first became associated with Dr. Dabrowski and what your particular interest was in his theory.

M. When I first met Dabrowski in 1968-69 I was a new student at the University of Alberta in the Department of Psychology. I was interested in psychology from a developmental perspective and very concerned with the aspect of "values" in human development. I was studying Kohlberg's theory of moral development at this time. One day I came across the little book called Positive Disintegration, written by Dr. Dabrowski. I was fascinated by the concept of an emerging hierarchy of values in higher levels of development. This was central to his theory.

Then one day as I was crossing the campus I had a unique experience that I cannot account for: a short, little man came walking towards me wearing a dark coat and pants and a dark beret (I did not know Dr. Dabrowski was in Edmonton). As the man came near me I received some emanations from him that compared to the feelings I got from reading the book. I can't describe it clearly except to say that off of this strange little man came these emanations that reminded me

of the book. I stared at him and I thought, "well, impossible"; but afterwards I actively searched for information concerning the whereabouts of Dr. Dabrowski.

I asked various people: "Have you ever heard of Dr. Dabrowski and do you know anything about him?" Most said "no," but then someone said "Yes, as a matter of fact I think he's on campus." I went and introduced myself to him. He was teaching a graduate seminar at the time and was meeting with a group of people putting together the book called Mental Health Through Positive Disintegration (1970)--the little one with the khaki green cover, the colour of green you would expect people to wear in mental hospitals. I had an opportunity to sit in on the discussions that accompanied the final writing of the book and that is basically how I met him. Somewhat anecdotal, but significant for me.

I was immediately interested in the possible connection between Kohlberg and Dabrowski and I attempted to fit the two theories together in my mind to make some sense of them both. It really gave me food for thought for a long time. I could see that Dabrowski had a much broader theoretical framework, and one that was for me, infinitely more complex. It seemed to subsume other points of view. It changed a fixed field (Psychology) in which theories are static entities into a field of dynamic interaction. I believe that Dabrowski's theory of Positive Disintegration is to the field of psychology what the theory of relativity is to science.

D. Now, I would like to direct our conversation to the topic of my thesis--the illustration of Dabrowski's theory using the characters from three of Chaim Potok's books: The Chosen, My Name is Asher Lev, and In the Beginning. I am wondering if you can tell me, Marlene, if you are familiar with these books.

M. I have read these three books plus The Promise. When I first became aware of Chaim Potok's books a couple of years ago I was fascinated with the theme that ran through his books and felt that the author was certainly reflecting something of his own deep values. I could tell that he had undergone an emotional experience while writing the books through each of his characters.

D. I would like to begin by discussing one of the main characters in In the Beginning - Davey. Throughout most of the book he is 4-6 years old. Due to an accident that occurred to him when he was an infant he was frequently bedridden with severe, long-drawn bouts of illness.

Davey is portrayed as thin, frail and pale. He is emotionally very sensitive and impressionable and experiences many moments of fear and dread which keep him in a constant state of nervous excitability. In my opinion, these characteristics are indicative of what Dabrowski would call "psychoneurosis." Do you think Dabrowski would interpret these symptoms in that way, and would he likely see this as a "positive" disintegration?

M. O.K. The question someone else might ask of you is how can you

even dare suggest that a child could be seen as psychoneurotic. I mean don't you have to be grown up to be psychoneurotic? Don't you have to experience troubles in life? What do you mean a child is psychoneurotic? Dabrowski would say, yes, that even a child such as Davey whom you have described you can see elements of psychoneurosis and that it is precisely these symptoms of acute anxiety and dread that indicate the "germs of multilevelness."

D. I am still wondering, though, how does one label it as positive as opposed to negative. Does the labelling process have to do with how you see the person developing in his later years?

M. In fact Dabrowski says that whether or not a disintegration is positive or negative is always defined by the outcome, and it is very difficult to describe in the middle of the process what is truly happening. Since you know what happened to Davey in his later years, you can say that, yes it was positive.

D. As I was reading In the Beginning, Davey's emotional, imaginational and intellectual overexcitabilities fascinated me. It seemed to me extraordinary for such a young, little boy to possess such a rich inner life. I would like to give you a few examples.

Early on in the book his cousin Saul tells him a story about Abraham smashing his father's idols. Davey becomes very excited and upset. To Saul this is simply a story, but to Davey this is frighteningly real:

> How can you smash a head? There are so many precious and beautiful things in a head. Eyes and a nose and lips. Even in a head of stone. (p. 24)

Another indication of his emotional and imaginational overexcitabilities is his inordinate concern with the notion of "accidents." He has a propensity towards accidents and is overly anxious about his involvement in unfortunate incidents. He has terrible nightmares about this and expresses his deep concern in the following way:

> No, I did not like this accident world; I felt alone and frightened in it. I did not know whom I might hurt the next minute or who might hurt me. (p. 69)

He abhors violence and death. The sight of a dead bird leaves him cold and nauseated. He says to his father:

> I'm afraid of killing, Papa ... I don't want to have to kill anyone in order to live. I hate killing and dying. (p. 119)

What do you think Dabrowski would have to say about this?

M. Your description of Davey's concern about not having control over the unpredictable, unfortunate things that can happen in life make me think right away of Dabrowski's description of the emotional quotient in human beings. He has claimed that if a person can be measured on an I.Q. scale, then why not an E.Q. scale? He believes that just as there are intellectual geniuses and intellectually retarded people, so there are emotional geniuses and people who are emotionally retarded. Individuals who are retarded or emotionally deficient will exhibit little if any feeling for anyone else, perhaps, based on the

fact that they have none themselves. An emotional genius on the other hand will demonstrate deep empathy and caring for others and like Davey possess a high range of sensitivity, so that, yes, he could attribute life to a head of stone and realize symbolically that this head is far too precious to be smashed.

D. Marlene, I would like to talk further on Davey's phobia with accidents. He laments: "accidents trailed in my wake like foul-breathing specters" (p. 11). "I hate accidents. Why did God make accidents?" (p. 82). Max, his father, is also shaken by accidents and believes that the biggest accident of all is to be born a Jew: "A man plans and God laughs. God, in heaven if there is a God in this world, How he must laugh!" (p. 67). He explains to Davey: "About accidents we do not have many choices. Our job is to make better the world God gave us. We are partners with God" (p. 68).

For me, this is an interesting way of exploring the issue of free-will versus determinism. Am I truly master of my own fate or am I continually subjected to life's accidents? Do I have any control whatsoever? Or am I simply a manifestation of how I react to life's accidents? I am wondering what you think Dr. Dabrowski would have to say about this issue?

M. That reminds me of the work we did with Dr. Dabrowski researching the verbal stimuli test in which he asked individuals to respond to words such as "great joy," "great sadness," "success," their "ideal," and "death." People gave varying responses according

to their level of development.

For example, there was a great range of difference between the response of a Level I person and a Level IV person to "great joy." Great joy for the Level I person is very egocentric and has to do with very simple, material gains. Great joy at the fourth level is always allocentric, never egocentric and is concerned with loving others and the realization of one's ideal. The response to "death" deals with the question that you are asking: Am I free to make my own choices in life or am I ruled by fate? Am I self-determined or other-determined?

For a Level I person, the major questions of life are of no consequence. He is oblivious to them. Death, is therefore, not a matter of concern: it happens to someone else. His free-will is an expression of his primitive unconscious drives. He acts without thinking.

At the second level, the response to death can be grave and serious, but quickly overcome. An example of this might be a Level II mother saying: "Well, yes, my son lost his father, but I bought him a dog, he went to school and he is happy now." This is an extreme example but the point I am trying to make is that the grief experienced is momentary.

At the third level, an individual becomes very concerned with the question of death, particularly his own death. (The kind of concern that Davey showed.) His concern is somewhat egocentric; he wonders about unfinished goals should he suddenly die, and what contributions

he will have made to humanity throughout his lifetime, but he is also deeply concerned about the loss of people's lives that he loves.

At the fourth level, one has come to terms with one's death. A fourth level person lives each day as if it ended tonight. His gravest concern is now helping other people actualize their own potential. A high level example of a response to fate would be Beethoven's Fifth Symphony which he composed after he discovered he was becoming deaf. This was a great tragedy because music was his life, but he said: "Fate? I'll take fate by the throat!" A lower level person denies fate, but a higher level person accepts and ignores it. He continues living his life transcending it. Davey has not reached this state of personal evolvement yet, but he will probably come to it in his lifetime because he is already asking himself: Is this an accident, is this predetermined, how do I escape it, is it cowardly to escape it? How can I deal with life, with the problem of fate, with death?

D. The way Davey deals with his problems and fears concerning his "accident world" is a clear manifestation of his intense imaginational and emotional overexcitabilities. He creates his own world. He is frequently sick, as I have previously mentioned, and he retreats into a world of his own making under his milky white sheets. The following passage is an illustration of this:

> I slid beneath my sheet. Now I was safe ... The world outside was dark with horror. It hurt Jews and I was always having accidents and getting

> sick in it. But I knew I was safe inside the clean white world I had created for myself. Nothing could touch me inside that world. It was cool and white and the Angel of Death never entered it with his arsenal of accidents.
>
> (In the Beginning, p. 96)

M. That could also be an excellent description of how a very sensitive psychoneurotic bordering on psychotic individual copes with reality. For a child, this is lovely, a beautiful retreat. It could even be the beginning of the formation of an inner psychic milieu which I think of as a quiet white cave where we go inside of ourselves when there is nowhere to go outwardly.

To retreat inside oneself, this is important and beneficial--one goes there to receive the strength to come out again, but to go there and stay there, this is serious. This may be exactly what occurs to some individuals whom we call mentally ill, perhaps catatonic, or some types of schizophrenics. Dabrowski would say that this kind of behaviour reflects the upper end of the second level where when life's tensions become so strong the individual has only three choices: 1) to continue on in one's process of development--Davey seems unable to do this at this point, 2) to regress to Level I and reintegrate primitively, which is impossible for a sensitive person to do, 3) or finally, to go mad!

These are the options for anyone at the second level because the tensions are so great. At this point and time when we consider little Davey in his white sheet cave, we think this is very lovely, but if he

were to continue this behaviour when he was 30 we would be worried about him, right?

D. Yes, of course, he is only a young boy. The way I see Davey evolving is that he takes this emotional and imaginational overexcitability of his early youth and transforms it in his adolescence into an intellectual quest for the truth. He insists on knowing the entire truth. Partial truths do not satisfy him. Even as a youngster he says to his cousin Saul that if he had a choice he would like to be an elephant, because elephants remember everything, and then he could be the "smartest man in the whole world" and "always know what the truth is" (p. 49). His mother reads to him constantly and although he does not understand everything she says, he states:

> I liked listening to the words. It was always exciting to hear new words. It was what I had instead of good friends. (p. 221)

Davey is the brightest student in his class; he is known as the "question asker." Teachers tire of his endless barrage of questions and attempt to appease his giant intellectual appetite by giving him extra reading on the side. As an older boy he undertakes serious study of the Bible using the scientific method. This is considered to be a radical approach in his community and he is scorned by his family and friends. However, Davey perseveres in his desire to know the entire truth, to truly understand the roots and beginnings of his people and so he takes the uncertain path. He steps beyond the familiar boundaries of his traditional teachings and enters an unknown world

where he must mix with non-observant Jews and Gentiles. He does all this in order to understand his beloved Torah in all its supremacy and fullness.

M. It sounds like Davey has emotional, imaginational and intellectual overexcitabilities, but that his intellectual overexcitability is his dominant mode. We can possess all three overexcitabilities and still have a preferred mode. In fact if one was to undertake serious study that would reflect one's inner psychic transformation of the other excesses of energy moving towards and enhancing the preferred mode--in Davey's case his intellectual overexcitability.

D. I am realizing as we discuss Davey's primary overexcitabilities that as I studied his character in depth I noticed he was sensually overexcitable as well. He really appreciates the sensual aspects of nature. He wants to touch and feel everything. This is his way of relating to life. Perhaps, he feels so restricted and insular as a result of his illness that to touch and feel things makes him feel more fully alive and in contact with the world.

He loves the animals at the zoo, especially his favourite billy goat: "I petted his warm wet nose and let his hard lips and wet tongue tickle the palm of my hand" (p. 64). He loves the feeling of the cool, piney air on his hands and face when roaming in the woods (p. 35-36), and he rejoices in the freedom that he experiences on his tricycle, again revelling in the sensual appreciation of the wind on his face and ears. He loves to be touched by the beauty of nature.

The question that arises in my mind is whether or not Dabrowski would categorize Davey's sensual overexcitability as a lower or higher form of evolvement. It seems to me that overall, Dabrowski considers sensual overexcitability to be one of the lower or less preferred modes of channeling energy, and yet, my distinct feeling is that Davey's sensual appreciation of life deeply enhances his emotional, imaginational and intellectual approaches to life. He experiences life on a very deep level, and wants to touch and feel the essence of things; he wants to touch the inner core of everything he comes in contact with; he wants to know and experience the truth of every living thing. This is consistent with his overall character: to know the Truth unequivocally and with a deep appreciation for what is.

M. You are making what Dabrowski would probably find to be an interesting distinction between lower and higher sensual overexcitability. I think that would be a very legitimate observation, because if you think of one component, of say, being a pianist, it is necessary to be involved with your piano very sensually, as well as emotionally, imaginationally, and intellectually. Sensually you are expressing yourself with your fingers and I think this is a higher form of sensual overexcitability than, perhaps, attaching your fingers to a ball as many athletes do on a field.

Dabrowski would say that a child who possesses remarkable developmental potential would manifest all the overexcitabilities--psychomotor, sensual, imaginational, emotional and intellectual. It

is only in growth and development that one sees the psychomotor and the sensual overexcitabilities transformed and brought under the control of the other three. In any child with great developmental potential prior to the age of five or even older you would see all of these overexcitabilities rampant.

In Davey's case the psychomotor was diminished due to his illness, but had he not been ill, he might have exhibited psychomotor overexcitability as well. Therefore, a predominance of sensual and psychomotor overexcitability in an individual is not significant until a person is close to adulthood; then, if you only have those two and none of the other three, you might be able to classify this individual as a Level I person.

A psychopath uses only his sensual and psychomotor overexcitabilities. If he likes something he sees, he moves towards getting it; his whole world revolves around him being a reacting agent to what is out there. The person of higher developmental potential reaches out for the world or reaches in for the world and responds very differently. This person becomes <u>still</u> inside and develops control over his sensual and psychomotor aspects. He does not allow them to dominate him; he transforms them and channels his excess energy towards his ideal!

D. I believe that Davey's excesses of energy are transformed into an ardent search for the Truth.

M. Dabrowski would say that this is a sign in a child of intellectual overexcitability as the predominant sign. If a child asks you a question

which perhaps, you are too tired or lazy to answer and you give him only a partial truth, he will sense this and plague you until you go to the source and provide him with the whole truth. The intellectually overexcitable child will not settle for partial truths. Sometimes children with high level intellectual overexcitability can be a nuisance and aggravation for educators who are just as human as anybody else.

D. Well, actually this is how the story begins.

While Davey and his parents are visiting Mr. Bader, Davey inadvertently spots a photograph on Mr. Bader's desk. It is a photograph of Davey's father and about forty of his soldier friends that he organized to form the Am Kedoshim society with the intention of fighting the Enemy and protecting the Jews from further onslaught. Davey was not supposed to have seen the photograph since these Jewish men are pictured carrying weapons and that was against the Polish law at the time. Davey keeps on mentioning this photograph, and of course, the more his parents insist that such a photograph does not exist, the more Davey keeps on talking about it, dreaming about it, and generally being upset about it. Finally Mr. Bader realizes that Davey is wise beyond his years and tells him the truth about the photograph.

As you know Marlene, I am very interested in the transformative process that occurs in human beings. It seems to me that it is Davey's very insistence on the whole truth and his refusal to accept inadequate explanations that later transforms into his quest for his roots, his beginnings, and the truth about his beloved Torah. It is this

remarkable tenacity and perseverance that later become the seeds of his developmental process.

Davey is a risk-taker. To leave the security of traditional teachings and to take an uncertain path in search for the Truth involves the deepest part of oneself. Davey listens to his inner voice and follows his integrity even though others urge him to adhere to the familiar path. He surrenders to his deepest urges when he makes the decision to become a Bible scholar.

M. This is an early manifestation of authenticity that Davey is displaying. His refusal to have his perceptions of reality distorted by others, and his insistence that he saw what he saw--this takes considerable courage. Most of us are more easily socially determined. We do not even come to an opinion or belief before checking it out with significant others and tallying the majority vote. To step outside of this process and discover what lies deep inside of ourselves is a very painful process and usually occurs in adulthood. It sounds to me like Davey was already suffering this pain as a child.

D. Discussing Davey's intellectual overexcitability and his emotional integrity bring to mind an interesting passage in the book where Davey in his excitement and anticipation of the first day of school spends days walking around his apartment carrying the new briefcase that his father has just purchased for him (p. 173). This deliberate action of his really appealed to me and touched my heart. He gets so excited about things that matter to him.

M. It sounds to me like he is living in his ideal!

D. Is this perhaps the beginnings of what Dabrowski would term "personality ideal"?

M. Yes, that would be a beginning, an early form of it. By walking around with his briefcase he was dreaming his ideal into reality. Again, this incident would reflect an early manifestation of his later interest and enthusiasm in intellectual pursuits. We are talking here again about the transformative process as you have mentioned before, and how, for example, Davey's insatiable intellectual curiosity as a child is still apparent but in a more sophisticated fashion when he becomes an adult.

At this point, I would like to discuss Dabrowski's framework for the process of transformation because I believe that it is frequently difficult to grasp. It was difficult for me to grasp when I first studied the theory. What do you do with all of the overexcitabilities and the dynamisms that appear here and there on the developmental chart? It is all so confusing. One wonders about the dynamisms which do not appear until the second, third, or fourth level. What is it all about?

Finally, I made sense of the process. The overexcitabilities are like five crude aperatures or openings, channels of information flow that are later transformed and refined into dynamisms. The dynamisms are both the <u>outcome</u> and <u>process</u> of development which is so very hard to understand. It is like imagining a body now with twenty or thirty refined outlets rather than five large undifferentiated outlets.

The excess energy of these five openings has been rerouted and comes out transformed in a much more refined and sophisticated manner.

D. It sounds to me like you are saying that the overexcitabilities are the raw material for this transformative process, the dynamisms being the refined outcome as well as part of the whole process. This is evident in the characters I have been studying.

For example, as a young lad Asher Lev has imagination and emotional overexcitabilities. He has a compulsion to draw and one gets the feeling that he must draw and paint despite anything that is happening around him. This is his emotional and imaginational outlet, the way he expresses all that is inside of him. And for awhile it seems very egocentric. As time passes, however, and the refinement process takes place, there is a transformation of his energies into higher level dynamisms such as autonomy, authenticity and personality ideal. He must paint the Truth; he must follow his inner integrity and paint what he sees and feels and not what he thinks would bring pleasure to others. He must balance the world.

His mentor advises him not to become a whore to his own existence: "... an artist is a person first. He is an individual. If there is no person, there is no artist" (p. 244). Asher adheres strongly to this advice and paints the Truth even though he feels the pain and agony of it in the process. He steps out of his own traditional boundaries and utilizes a mold foreign to his existence as a Jew in order to paint the Truth.

M. Like Davey, you have another truth-seeker.

D. Danny is similar too. If Danny can be said to have a compulsion, it is to "know" and understand. He has an incredible mind and engages in many far-reaching intellectual pursuits especially for a young boy of 15 years old. As the transformation process takes place the dynamisms of autonomy, authenticity, and personality ideal take stronger hold inside of him. He cannot be intellectually trapped; he must pursue his ideal. From this his decision to abandon the Tzaddikate follows.

This brings me to another topic I would like to explore with you, that of conflict. There are patterns or rhythms of conflict in Potok's literature (here I am specifically referring to the three books we are discussing), the most obvious one being Father-Son conflict, the son wishing to take a different path than the father. This constitutes a very painful experience for both father and son, but is potentially an enriching one.

In the case of Danny Saunders, in The Chosen, his break from the Tzaddikate causes his father immense grief and yet, through the process of working it out they are brought closer together. With Asher Lev the break from the familiar path is a debilitating one for Aryeh; Asher has gone beyond the limits that his father can tolerate. In the case of Davey, in In the Beginning, Max does not agree with Davey's position and yet on some level he understands. He is able to say to his son with conviction: "You will fight with words and I will fight with guns" (p. 360). These are not only father-son conflicts, but these are

cultures in conflict as well--the old traditional European culture in conflict with the ideas and mores of the newer North American culture.

What is fascinating for me is that just as conflict is an integral part of Dabrowski's theory, so is conflict elemental to Chaim Potok's books. And the outcome of the conflict is usually of a positive nature for both parties involved. Each person evolves spiritually and emotionally as a result. Each person comes in touch with a universal truth inside himself.

It is interesting for me that Chaim Potok does not only deal with intrapsychic conflict, the ambivalences and ambitendencies inside oneself, but as well he deals with interpersonal conflict, and then on a grander scale he touches upon whole cultures in conflict. I am wondering if you think that Dabrowski's theory of Positive Disintegration can be applied to interpersonal relationships and whole cultures. I am also wondering how one measures conflict in terms of higher and lower forms and how one measures the quality of the conflict in terms of the theory.

M. Probably by the degree of authenticity displayed by either participant. One of Dabrowski's basic themes is: "life is conflict." If you want a definition of life--it's conflict. If you are authentic, you are not inauthentic and your authenticity will get you into conflict everyday. You will probably lock horns before the day is through. Through your authenticity there are times when others are hurt because of you and the persons being hurt can feel the difference between "I'm hurting you

because I want to," and "I'm not doing this to hurt you, but I'm doing it even though it does hurt you because this is authentically me." Now a person undergoing an authentic conflict usually considers the other person's point of view because he has the dynamism of "subject-object" operating in himself. This is the capacity to stand figuratively outside of oneself and reflect upon one's behaviour. You are able to perceive what you are doing and you can see how your actions might be open to misinterpretation by a person who at that moment is not able to broaden his perceptions. Therefore, a person who is authentic has deep compassion for the person against whom he "rebels." True authenticity always involves positive maladjustment which is a conscious awareness of the fact that one is through the Third Factor transcending social determinism and this tends to shock others.

Now, as a growing child you do not always have this compassion for your parents. It is difficult enough to fight your way free some of the time without having all of this compassion for your parents, but later in life, in retrospect, you might reflect and wonder: "How could they stand me as I went through this process of 'authentic rebellion' because at that time I did not know what it was like to be a parent?"

Parents, on the other hand, usually because they are older and have had more experience, can see both points of view. Furthermore, an authentic parent realizes a child has to go through conflict in order to establish himself as a separate autonomous human being. The parent knows this is a painful process and yet sees this as an absolute

necessity in the child's life. In fact, as authentic parents, if they had "puppets" for children at the age of 30 years, they would be greatly dismayed. And so, even though, they cannot stand the authentic rebellion that comes with the period of adolescence they accept it as a better consequence than the child not rebelling at all and thus not evolving.

From what you have said and described I do agree that these are father-son conflicts, or perhaps, conflicts against authority. It may be that what is happening in the individual is a conflict between external and internal authority, whereby a shift is occurring from being externally disciplined to being self-disciplined. This, as you mentioned, can go on between individuals, between groups and between cultures.

D. This examination of conflict in both Dabrowski's theory and Potok's books is very important to me, and as you know is central to my thesis topic. I want to demonstrate that Dabrowski's theory is something that is tangible and <u>real</u>, that the concepts of multilevelness and positive disintegration can be found in the worlds of art, literature and everyday living as we know it. The main characters in Potok's books do develop and strive for autonomy and authenticity with conflict being an inevitable, essential part of the process. These boys do move beyond the first two factors of biological and social determinism and arrive at the Third Factor whereby they now listen to their inner voice. They are self-directed, self-chosen men!

M. Davey, Danny and Asher Lev all transcend their social deter-

minism at great pain to themselves and their parents. This is the most difficult part of the growth process--the shift from Level II to Level III.

D. I am wondering if going beyond one's boundaries need always be so painful and full of anguish.

M. I think it is. Speaking rather simplistically, for the parents, it is as though you turn around and bite the hand of the parent who has been feeding you all these years. And from the parent's perspective it is difficult to find this now healthy creature who has become healthy from your love and care turn around and cut himself off from you. I think it's maybe the equivalent of a physical birth except that it is a psychic birth. I believe that the separation is absolutely necessary. The parents' umbilical cord must be cut and the child must stand alone--psychologically now and not only physically.

D. As these children are moving towards autonomy and authenticity I also see what Dabrowski would call a movement from "what is" to "what ought to be." Would you agree with this?

M. Yes, good point and good timing in terms of the question, because here is where adults make a mistake in terms of their children. They say: "Well, I'll tell you what you ought to be. Sure, I see what you are doing wrong and I'll tell you what you ought to be." Therefore, to the extent that you become what someone else tells you, you ought to be, you are not what you ought to be because that can only be decided by yourself. In fact many people say: isn't Dabrowski's theory prescriptive? It is true, it's not just descriptive; it does prescribe a

program of development albeit unique to each individual.

For example, if someone came in to see Dr. Dabrowski with predominant sensual and psychomotor overexcitability, Dabrowski would not define what that person "ought" to be doing with his excess energy. The "ought" is determined by the individual from within.

If I tell myself what I ought to be, then and only then, is this authentic development. If what I tell myself I ought to be is in conflict with someone else's image of me and I succumb to their notion of me, then I am being false to my true self, and I have remained within the realm of social determinism.

Parents because of their good loving concern believe they know what "ought to be" for their children, primarily because they think they know "all" about their children, when they are hungry, when they are sick, when they are tired. It is hard for parents to give up the notion that they know best!

D. I guess that is why the process is so painful. It is hard to give up one's notions of what is right for another human being and allow them to develop according to their own integrity. In spite of their parents' efforts to dissuade them from taking the unfamiliar path, all three children--Danny, Asher and Davey do strive towards their own "ought to be."

M. You have been describing precisely the conflict (the movement from "what is" to "what ought to be") that your three main characters experience. In that time there can be a period where the person falls

into deep despair and does nothing, and that might be a time where the individual says: "Nobody tells me what to do, not even myself!" This is a time when the person is rebelling against his own inner authority. That can only go on for so long. Well, I suppose it could go on forever, but that would be absurd.

It is like being caught in pathological guilt. Let us say you don't do something you ought to do. You waste one hour not doing something you ought to do and then you waste the next hour feeling guilty about the previous hour. How do you transcend a developmental guilt? Well, the only healthy move out of pathological guilt is towards responsibility, where you now must feel guilty about having felt guilty if in fact you knew it was pathological. Then you must snap yourself over into a refusal to throw anymore precious time away because it is already a lost issue. Extremely easy to say, but very hard to do while in the process!

D. We have been talking about the notion of seeking truth and stepping beyond one's boundaries and I would like to now pursue this idea of transcendence a bit further.

There is a quote in My Name is Asher Lev that I would like to allude to:

> ... every great artist is a man who has freed himself from his family, his nation, his race. Every man who has shown the world the way to beauty, to true culture has been a rebel, a "universal" without patriotism, without home, who has found his people everywhere. (p. 195)

In order for Asher Lev to paint the Truth, he must go beyond his traditional upbringing and use Christian symbols and molds. He must enter a world of non-observant Jews and goyim where the ways of living and relating are substantially different from his own. Truth, Beauty, Freedom are absolute in nature and transcend any boundaries that one can impose on them. Truth is beyond good and evil. It simply is.

In Asher Lev's close-knit community he is considered a renegade and is finally asked to leave. In In the Beginning, David decides to study the Bible in such a way that challenges the divine origin of the Torah and forces him like Asher to enter the world of goyim. He must go beyond his culture to seek the whole Truth. Danny, in The Chosen, chooses to read literature that is forbidden by his father. In doing so, he acquires an intense interest in Freud and Psychology which eventually lead him to relinquishing his inherited position as the future Tzaddik for a career in Psychology.

These boys do not adjust to their Orthodox Jewish society's demands and expectations of them, and yet the choices they make are positive to their overall development. For me, these are distinct cases of positive maladjustment. Do you think Dabrowski would hold a similar view? I am also wondering what he would have to say about negative maladjustment?

M. I agree with you. These are cases of positive maladjustment. Dabrowski would say the same. However, there can be cases of

negative maladjustment too. Negative maladjustment is rebelling for the sake of rebelling. It comes from the immature second level "will," where a multiplicity of wills reign, each defining itself from an egocentric view of what I am not. People who maladjust negatively would say: "Well, I'm not that, and I'm not for that," but you cannot in all honesty find out what they are for; whereas positive maladjustment comes from one's authenticity and is striving for what one believes in. It is not a struggle against what is felt as external pressures. Therefore, this is the difference between the immature and mature person's way of dealing with what they feel are restrictions imposed on them. And yes, it can be negative.

For example, we often find that the founders of a protest movement are authentic and have high ideals. Theirs is a positive maladjustment. Sometimes a movement attracts hangers-on and individuals who are rebelling merely for the sake of rebelling, so that the tail-end of a protest movement may be filled with all kinds of psychological riff-raff. Theirs is definitely a negative maladjustment.

D. I remember attending one of Dabrowski's seminars where he talked about "concrete mysticism." I am wondering if this is linked to the idea of transcendence and if by this he meant that one must walk the mystical path with "practical" feet.

M. I heard him once talk about a "practical idealist" and this would be similar. I mean it's not enough to have ideals; it's not enough to have mysticism. He would say: "Why have dreams if you cannot shape

them into reality?" First you must dream and then you must wake up from your dream and make it a reality.

D. For me that signifies the movement from "what is" to "what ought to be."

M. Yes. To be caught with no dreams, that's the sad thing. To be "caught" in your dreams would be another sad thing. But to awaken from your dream and transform it into reality when you cannot change the world, when you see the incredible odds you are up against; to change yourself without negatively maladjusting, without accepting what you don't like; to give your life's energy to reaching out to others who want to change the world in the only way it can be changed, drop by drop, individual by individual; to reduce your egocentric dreams from something grandiose and impractical to something that you can realistically work with each day, that is something great. It's like that old notion, the longest journey begins with one step. The activating of a dream is hard work, that's what it is, hard work. Dreaming is easy.

D. While you've been mentioning this, I have been thinking about the seeds of developmental instinct being apparent in young children. Just as you said a journey of a thousand steps begins with one step, I believe that this "one step" begins for these children--Danny, Asher and Davey--in their childhood. The seeds of the inner psychic milieu must be there for the transformative process to take place. Perhaps, my idea of transcendence and what Dabrowski refers to as an emerging

hierarchy of values are a similar thing.

M. I think that young children like Asher, Davey and Danny realize that the artist has to work hard to get his end product. And hard work is not something we do three weeks or three years down the road after we have had a vacation. Hard work is what we do each day. It is the accumulation of small bits of hard work that create the authentic core of our transformation. It is people with grand ideas about themselves who cannot do what they perceive as small tasks because they're waiting for the day when they can be "heroes."

In Dabrowski's theory there is a quality of the heroic aspect, yet Dabrowski's theory does not talk about the hero per se, but instead the "unsung hero." Many people are "heroes" looking for a disaster and they have not been able to act because there's not a big enough something for them to participate in; on the other hand, it takes a lot of courage to be the "unsung hero" and daily do what is required of you as you transform your old "is" to your new "what ought to be," so subtly and imperceptibly as to be almost unnoticed. The fact is, the whole thing can be quite unobtrusive to the rest of the world and yet it is a gigantic work. It is a simple understanding of: "If you do an hour's work you get an hour's work done." It's actually mind boggling!

D. Max, Davey's father in <u>In the Beginning</u>, is the kind of man who likes to work slowly and patiently and build things up piece by piece. I believe he is a courageous man in the sense that he fights for his people with conviction and valour; however, I do not get the sense that

he is emotionally, imaginationally, and intellectually courageous. When the stockmarket crashes in New York, he suffers terribly for himself and his friends and cannot tolerate feeling useless. Although such a stressful situation can mark a developmental crisis in a person's life, it does not appear to do so in the life of Max. He does experience a total breakdown: he cannot function and deal with life on any level, and the once very active, brilliant organizer now sits in a chair with his pyjamas and robe on, pale and ashen, his jaw slack, and his mouth drooling. Eventually he sees his way out of this severe depression by discovering something to do--(remember, Max, is a practical man, a doer, not a thinker)--he becomes a watchmaker and builds up his business slowly but surely. However, as I was mentioning before, I do not get the sense that he climbs out of this breakdown having made any significant changes in his internal or external character. I don't believe the outcome is necessarily negative either; I just don't think that Max ends up with any real push or thrust towards self-reflection or a new perspective on life. I am wondering what Dabrowski would have to say about such a case.

M. It may have been a negative disintegration. Let me provide an analogy: a picture falls on the floor and breaks. This is impossible, but say it breaks into a puzzle and the puzzle is put back either exactly as it was before or somewhat differently so that it is the same but somewhat different when you look at it. Sometimes after disintegration the puzzle is put back just as it was and the person gains strength in

that position. In other words his original position is fortified. Perhaps, the strategies have changed, but the basic personality has not. A change of strategies is sometimes the only discernible difference that one can see after a disintegration. The motives remain the same but the "front" is different. This may have happened to Max.

I cannot remember how precipitously Max plunged into his breakdown, but Dabrowski would say that if he broke suddenly this would be prognostically more sound in terms of recovery than a slow break over time. Dabrowski believes that the energy that goes into the sudden disintegration is lying dormant, available for later use to help put the person back together again. Whereas, if you dribble into a break as some schizophrenics do all the time, you dribble out at the same rate.

D. I find Max to be an interesting character in that he seems to be a combination of levels. He has a Level I body--his physique is rugged, thick and muscular, combined with a Level II emotional life--mostly "stern and stiff" with a gentler side that lies hidden from public view, and Level III or IV responsibility where he puts a lot of his life's energy into helping others. I am wondering if it is possible for all of these incongruities to live side by side in one man.

M. That's a complex question. You are certainly describing a Level I type body. The psychomotor essential energy that you see in a Level I person is transformed in the Level IV person. The direction of the energy now differs. If it were all first level energy the man would be entirely self-seeking, but since Max in fact has been involved

with saving other people's lives, his energy has been channeled into some very responsible actions. So, I would agree, it sounds like third or fourth level responsibility in which case he has transformed. Now, it well may be that he is not solidly fourth level, because up to the middle of the third level, the individual can embrace first, second and third level dynamisms and drop back to the first level of primary integration under acute stress, and he can stay there. From the middle of the third level on and into the fourth level you can no longer drop back to the first level--you can only drop back to wanting to drop back. It would seem to me that if in fact Max is a fourth level person it would be impossible for him to have the emotionality of a Level II person--to say harm others with his unpredictability and intimidating manner.

D. I would agree with you. I would not put him in the category of a fourth level person.

M. Well does he want to be a hero? Is his fourth level responsibility possibly egocentric?

D. I have been asking myself that very same question. Both Max and Aryeh work very hard to help other Jews, but I have been wondering if it is not sometimes for their own sense of glory and self-satisfaction. Mostly I feel they do their work out of a sense of duty and for the principle that a Jewish life is sacred. For me, this is still responding to the first and second factors of one's development--biological and social determinism: you are born a Jew so you help only other Jews.

A higher ideal would simply be to embrace the principle that any life regardless of colour or creed is worth saving and educating.

END OF SESSION ONE

Part II

D. A similarity exists between all three characters--Danny, Asher and Davey--in their sense of alienation and apartness from others. They all feel different. Danny, in The Chosen, is an intellectual giant; he has a phenomenal mind and it is difficult for him to relate to his peers. His father brings him up in silence and this accentuates his inner loneliness and alienation. He learns a lot from this silence, though. He learns how to feel deeply, how to empathize with others, and how to search deeply inside of himself for the answers. Luckily, he has a close friend in Reuven Malter; yet one still senses that he stands apart in his greatness and sensitivity and his yearning for the Truth.

Asher is also a lonely boy and because of his amazing gift stands apart from others. Most children his age are immersed in their schoolwork and games and they do not have to contend with a father that travels all the time or a mother that is occupied with her studies. Although Asher loves his gift--it makes him happy and satisfies him--he also finds it a curse. His classmates make fun of him and he cannot seem to control his urges to paint. In one of his more disquieting and perturbed moments he agonizes:

> What do you want from me? ... I'm only a ten-year-old boy. Ten-year-old boys play in the streets; ten-year-old boys chase back and forth through the hallways of apartment houses; ten-year-old boys ride up and down elevators for afternoon entertainment; ten-year-old boys run after cars along New York Avenue. (p. 116)

As he matures though and becomes more accepting of his gift, he also becomes more accepting of his separateness. It seems to be a necessary ingredient for his evolution as an artist. It provides him with the raw material for his paintings.

In In the Beginning, Davey frequently feels as though he is invisible amongst adults. He describes one Shabbat meal:

> As always, I sat quietly listening to my parents talk about their friends, their plans, their lives in Poland. And, as always, it was as if I were not there much of the time. (p. 113)

Amongst his peer group Davey also feels alienated as he is sick most of the time and cannot play with the other kids. When he is older and of school age, he still remains separate from his classmates because of his inordinate brightness and intelligence. Later when he makes the decision to study the Bible in a scientific manner, this further alienates him from his family and friends. They cannot comprehend how he can digress from his original Orthodox Jewish teachings to explore a field of study that involves him mixing with non-observant Jews and Gentiles. And yet Davey must pursue the Truth. He is insistent on that. Feeling apart from others seems to be part of the transformative process for Davey as well.

In many of Dabrowski's cases and biographies, he cites examples of psychoneurotics who feel lonely much of the time and experience the pain of their differentness. I am wondering Marlene, if you believe that this existential loneliness, this pain of feeling apart from others is part of the developmental process for higher levels of development or a by-product of the process of evolution.

It is my belief that these children are hungering for something greater than human contact: they are hungering for a deep connection of ultimate value--Truth, Beauty, Goodness, God. Danny finds this in his deep desire to help others as a Psychologist; Asher in his art; and Davey in his search for the whole truth about his Torah. It is my belief that these early feelings of loneliness and alienation provide the foundation for their later quests in life.

M. In the verbal stimuli test, one of the verbal stimuli is "solitude and loneliness." Dr. Dabrowski always said that these words should go together. "What for you means solitude and loneliness?" he would ask, and for the individual up to Level II, loneliness would be looked upon as something negative, something to be avoided, something which happens to you when people reject you. It is felt as though the external world is acting upon you; therefore, first and second level loneliness is experienced as a loss of something external to yourself.

At the third level, solitude is something which is sought after and loneliness ceases to be something connected to the external world. Individuals who begin to show signs of multilevelness say that they must

have solitude for their personal development and that as far as loneliness is concerned, it is something that they can feel even in a crowd. And so the measure of loneliness changes experientially from something quantitative to something qualitative. It takes a jump, a quantum leap so to speak; a shift occurs.

So, in answer to your question, I would say that loneliness and solitude are both a necessary condition and essential by-product of higher development. I think that when the external world ceases to exist for a person, existentially speaking, and an inner psychic milieu is carved out, that one goes there in times of solitude.

D. In the book, Mental Health Through Positive Disintegration (Dabrowski, 1970), I came upon a passage where Dr. Dabrowski discusses the factors that are conducive to one's higher emotional development. He claims that there must be something lacking in one's immediate environment, or some kind of constitutional suffering for the process of positive disintegration to take place. He says:

> Positive inner psychic transformation occurs where children and youth do not have all the things necessary to fulfill all their basic needs and where conditions do not lead to the feeling of complete security. This transformation is more likely to occur where the individuals have only partial satisfaction of their basic needs and where stimuli exist which provoke at least partial dissatisfaction, hierarchization and postulation of an ideal. (p. 35)

He continues to say:

> Unpleasant experiences, and particularly existential shock and anxiety assist the growth of

> sensitivity to other people and to one's own development. (p. 36)

The reason I posed the previous question, in part, was because I felt that either biological and/or environmental factors did indeed contribute to the ensuing loneliness and alienation that each of the boys felt. Davey, for example, had to deal with the constant physical pain and emotional loneliness that his illness caused him. Danny had to deal with the "silence" his father imposed upon him and an environment that at times was emotionally and intellectually stifling. Asher was faced with "a unique and disquieting gift" that brought him both pain and pleasure in life; however, his compulsion to paint the Truth basically alienated him from his family and community.

M. When these burdens, so to speak, are constitutionally given in the form of overexcitabilities which will press you on developmentally whether you want to evolve or not, Dabrowski calls these "tragic gifts" because they are truly gifts but there is a tragedy associated with them--the suffering the individual experiences as a concomitant aspect of these gifts.

The other thing, of course, is to live in an enriched environment. By enriched, I mean one that provides an opportunity for developmental suffering. This is kind of a paradoxical statement but if you have parents who are themselves autonomous and authentic, then you will surely witness this kind of suffering early in life because your parents will be living beyond social determinism and will, therefore, be run-

ning into conflict with others in society.

D. This brings to mind another issue of interest to me. What occurs within a family whose members are at different levels of emotional development?

For example, in In the Beginning, Max is depicted as highly exciteable in the psychomotor area. He is very much at ease in the physical world. His son, Davey, on the other hand, is uncomfortable in the physical world due to his illness, and is primarily emotional, imaginational, and intellectual. I am wondering what repercussions such differences can have on the dynamics of a family.

M. I can address the question partly from my experience here at the Runaway project. I frequently see families where the father is primitively integrated or is uni-level at best. The mother and children are usually multilevel--it's not always this way but it's often this way. The woman most often considers both points of view, whereas the man usually considers only his own. She is democratic and he is autocratic: he rules the roost. The runaway is often a democratic multilevel youngster who runs away from home because of the conflict and confusion there. Now there are only two people voting in this democracy and the shift of power comes about as a result of the runaway. The father is usually shocked and seeks counselling because the world as he knows it, as he has controlled it, is momentarily lost. He is lost and comes in as an effort to restore that world. But just as an individual can experience disintegration as the result of an internal crisis,

so can a family. A family has its unique patterns and interactions and these can undergo positive disintegration in the wake of a crisis.

We prefer to work with a family while they are undergoing a crisis because we then have an opportunity to restructure their interactions at a higher level of awareness. Now perhaps some of the family members, formerly not heard, have more of a vote as well as a voice. Very often the multilevel person has more of a voice than a vote, especially when you are dealing with an autocrat in the family. This can be extremely frustrating for that individual. So, I guess that I would say that, yes, I have seen parents at a lower level of development than their children and vice versa too, and such a situation does profoundly affect the dynamics of the family.

D. I have thought about Dabrowski's theory not only in reference to families but as well as to global consciousness and the evolution of the human race. It seems to me that in each generation children prick the consciousness of their parents. They ask questions like: "Why are we here?" "Why are things done in this way?" "Why do you think and feel the way you do?" and the eternal question--"What is life all about, anyway?" Children are our guides and teachers ("The Child is the Father of Man"); they have a unique way of making us face ourselves.

In my experience, I have noticed that children are often the projection of things we must confront within ourselves.

For example, I am the parent of a child that is very spontaneous and enthusiastic; I am not that way and this child greatly irritates me

because she is different. If I am willing to look at myself, however, this major difference can provide me with a unique opportunity for growth. Perhaps, I am unsure of myself and her approach to life threatens me; maybe, I feel safer living a more rigid, routine life-style. This is only a hypothetical example, but I see this over and over again with children and their parents.

Back to the characters we have been discussing, Max frequently has a difficult time with Davey, perhaps because Davey reminds him of what he is not; Max is not a man of great intellectual power: he is not a thinker; he is a doer!

As they grow older, children often work on the same kinds of issues as their parents have in the past. But they have the opportunity to go one step farther. They do not always choose to do this, (or perhaps, they are not capable of doing this because of some physical, emotional or intellectual deficiency) but the opportunity is there.

For example, the children we have been discussing could choose to remain in their traditional environments and continue their parents' work in the world. But due to their intense search for what is true for themselves they emerge out of their original frameworks to discover a world of their own making. And their children could conceivably do the same. And thus the evolvement of the human race to higher levels of consciousness. Firstly, there is the original structure--Primitive Integration; then a breakdown of that structure--Unilevel and Multi-level Disintegration; and then a restructuring of a new framework on a

higher level--Secondary Integration. I find this whole area fascinating!

M. Interesting, maybe children are able to, let's say rethink with our given framework and maybe not so easily about what we are thinking. Our children, if they are alert, can see the framework we think with and then step beyond. They may get trapped in their own framework, but children can go beyond that as well. I see your point!

D. There's an interesting contrast in In the Beginning between Davey and another little boy on the block, Eddie Kulanski. Eddie is a Polish Catholic who is depicted as sly, dishonest, foul-mouthed and terribly aggressive. He hates Davey on sight simply because he is Jewish. Davey, in contrast, as I have described before, is very gentle, caring and sensitive. There appears to be a strong dichotomy in this book between Jews and Gentiles and I was wondering if Chaim Potok, perhaps, intended Davey and other Jewish souls to represent ultimate Good and Gentiles (Eddie here in particular) to represent ultimate Evil.

How do Good and Evil live side by side each other? Does one humble itself or acquiesce before the other? I have several examples here where Davey is hurt by Eddie (Good is struck by Evil), but like Jesus Christ he turns the other cheek and loves and forgives instead.

There is one incident in particular where Davey is assaulted by Eddie and his cousin. They take off his pants to gawk at his Jewish genitals. Davey, in an attempt to set himself free, brings up his foot and kicks one of the boys in the face. He is frightened and runs. What

is interesting for me is that he is more concerned about the possibility of having hurt one of the boys than his own hurt and humiliation.

During the Depression, many people were forced to move from their homes in order to relocate in less expensive areas of the city. One day Davey notices that Eddie is moving. His heart goes out to him and he quickly finds himself by Eddie's side mumbling:

> I'm sorry you have to move away. I know you don't like me because I'm a Jew and you think I killed Jesus and we have a strong organization that wants to run the world. That's all lies, Eddie. But even if you believe it, still I'm sorry you have to move and I hope you don't have a bad time in your new place. Goodbye Eddie. (p. 221-222)

In My Name is Asher Lev, there is also emphasis on this theme of Good vs. Evil. Asher is constantly disturbed about the usefulness of his gift. Does it come from God, or does it come from the "Other Side?" Is it an expression of the demonic or the divine?

I am wondering if Dabrowski addresses this issue of Good vs. Evil, or perhaps, he considers it as higher levels of evolvement representing Good and lower levels representing Evil.

M. I think he might rather talk about the shift from egocentrism to allocentrism in individual development. This has immediately made me think of a number of theorists who have differing viewpoints on this subject. For example, Carl Rogers believes that people are born "good" and if left to their own resources become good people. Freud, on the other hand would be inclined to think that people are intrinsically

evil and without restraint would grow up to be Evil. I think Dabrowski believes that the capacity for good and evil lies within each individual, with the exception of some rare cases where the person is born constitutionally emotionally deficient, like your seriously morally retarded.

I think that people are in fact socialized into being evil or sociopathic. They are not psychopathic at birth but they become so due to their learning experience. And even if you could understand each person historically it would be hard for me to say at what point. I just can't think of looking at a little baby as being evil!

D. I am interested in pursuing Dabrowski's notion of the movement of egocentrism to allocentrism in human development. Studying Davey, in In the Beginning, I found him to be unusually nonegocentric and empathetic towards others for a young boy of 4-6 years old. Here are some examples of deep caring and sensitivity that he demonstrates towards others:

He visits Mrs. Horowitz, a decrepit, old lady with a foul stench about her, because he senses that this makes her happy. He inadvertently has been the cause of the death of her first dog (another one of his "accidents") and this causes him great pain and remorse. He says:

> Sitting there in the dim tiny kitchen, listening to her soft querulous voice, I began to sense her loneliness. I felt deep remorse for the pain I had caused her by bringing about the death of her first dog. To sit alone with the Angel of Death. I could not imagine it. (p. 137)

And a further comment:

> She reached over and patted my cheek with a dry bony hand. I was surprised that I did not mind her doing that to me. In a vague way I understood that I had made her happy and somehow that was important to me. (p. 141)

Most children who are suffering from physical pain and illness would think about their needs first before considering others, but not Davey. On more than one occasion, he tries to hide his illness from his father so as not to cause him concern. In relation to Max, Davey says: "I did not want to spoil his happiness by telling him I had begun to feel ill" (p. 78). Later, when his father has a nervous breakdown Davey apologizes for becoming ill: "I'm sick again Papa. I'm sorry to be sick again now. I tried to stay well" (p. 218).

Davey's baby brother, Alex, is upset over his father's illness. He sits in the kitchen with Davey and tells him of his bad dreams. Davey suddenly offers to oil his bike. He says:

> A while later my brother entered the rectangle and rode up and down the street on the tricycle. I thought I could hear the smooth turning of the wheels. It had been a good feeling to fix it. (p. 241)

I am wondering what Dabrowski would think of this. It seems to me that Davey already possesses the inner psychic milieu of a Level III or IV person.

M. I'm sure Dabrowski would find him unusual. That's not to say impossible. He has even gone far enough to suggest that not every individual has to go through all of the developmental levels. Not everybody is born at Level I; some are born at Level III. In order to explain

this, you might have to acknowledge the possibility of reincarnation, but he didn't go that far.

In terms of children, though, Dabrowski would probably apply the old common adage, and this is not his, that with some children you have to raise an eyebrow and with others your fist. Perhaps you need to raise an eyebrow with Davey and a fist with Eddie.

Dabrowski would further add that if you are faced with a constitutionally insensitive child, then as a part of the child-rearing process you would strategically introduce positive shocks into the child's world to help him grow.

With normal children life brings enough shocks. One has to simply make sure that they do not avoid the consequences of those shocks, especially if they bring them on themselves. With sensitive children, though, you might have to help them avoid some of those shocks because they cannot deal with them; they get exhausted.

Sensitive children learn things in an <u>all or none</u> fashion. But with insensitive children they may need to learn a lesson ten times before they get the neural pattern laid down, before they thoroughly understand, that "No, you don't ride your tricycle on the piano, or whatever!"

D. I would like to discuss the topic of <u>relationships</u> with you. David Malter, in <u>The Chosen</u>, tells his son Reuven that the Talmud states that a person should do two things for himself: one is to acquire a teacher and the other is to acquire a friend (p. 74). There are many

instances in the three books we are discussing where significant teacher-student relationships are formed.

For example, in My Name is Asher Lev, Asher acquires the well-renowned artist Jacob Kahn as his teacher. In In the Beginning Davey first acquires Mr. Bader, a well-read Bible scholar as his teacher and then Rav Sharfman, a great Talmudist. In The Chosen, the two fathers teach their sons and the two friends, Danny and Reuven teach each other.

These relationships are deep and significant; distinctive and growth-promoting. In Dabrowski's terms of reference these relationships are unrepeatable, exclusive and very close.

One aspect that I find extremely interesting is that in most of these relationships the teacher deliberately creates a certain distance between himself and the student, yet there is still a strong feeling of love and respect apparent between the two. In In the Beginning, Davey proclaims that in the case of Rav Sharman "distance with such a rebbe was an act of love" (p. 405).

I am wondering what Dabrowski would have to say about this.

M. This connects back to the question where we discussed solitude and loneliness. Dabrowski would say that at the higher levels there is a closeness at a distance because the essence of the individual is now more spiritual than material. With lower level individuals there can be a distance where there is closeness. With Level I individuals if they are not close they are distant. At Level II and early III, individuals

are like Piaget's concrete seekers: they cannot love abstractedly; they must have close continuous contact. Once a person has developed more spiritually, say an individual at the latter part of Level III and Level IV, then closeness at a distance is possible.

Perhaps one way to teach a child this is to show him that real closeness between two people is not always associated with physical proximity, and let him puzzle it out, like an unspoken Zen Koan!

D. I agree with you. I feel that these teacher-student relationships are very close, high level relationships even though there is a sense of distance and partial expression.

M. I think relationships at higher levels are just like good whisky--you just need a very little. It's just that cheap booze you need a lot of!

D. That's a superb analogy. In the book, Existential Thoughts and Aphorisms, written under Dabrowski's pen name (Paul Cienin), there is a short paragraph about relationships that I find somehow opposes the essence of his theory. He says:

> One should remember a close and deceased person as a fresh flower and living wound, but not only this ... one should live with him as a person, at least in thought, imagination and longing; one should create his transcendental form, and if it's possible--never again have such a close relationship. (p. 28)

This statement strikes me as rather morbid and restricting. It seems to me that it is not growth-promoting and expansive like the rest of his theory. It does not favour an attitude of letting go and moving on in life; rather it seems to promote a certain "stuckness" and

stultification in the area of relationships. I don't know if this is simply an "Old World" view of close relationships or how Dabrowski really feels about this subject.

M. Well, he thinks at higher levels, relationships are unique and unrepeatable. We can assume that this was perhaps, translated by someone who had a grasp of the Polish and English languages but not necessarily an understanding of the subtle theory. When he says that one should never again have such a close relationship, that really could have meant, in its original form, that one should realize the uniqueness and unrepeatability of this relationship. In other words, you cannot find a friend to fill that category. There now remains a hole in that space and time which that person filled and no one else can fill it for you. I would like to think that's what he meant, because the other way does sound morbid and obsessive.

D. Something else I would like to discuss with you is the subject of inhibition. When I first came upon Dabrowski's idea of inhibition I didn't exactly understand it because the impression I got was that Dabrowski was talking about inhibition in a positive sense, the notion of a person inhibiting his lower forms of being, thinking and relating to this world. In the contemporary sense, however, the idea of inhibition has been a negative one. In the Encounter and T-Group movement of the last two decades, inhibition has been looked upon as not being true to yourself. There has been great emphasis from all the different psychotherapies and psychotechnologies of the 60's and 70's to

express whatever is going on inside of you and to express it fully.

In Potok's books, lower level characters do not inhibit their emotions in the Dabrowskian sense and the higher level characters do. For example, Danny, in The Chosen, does feel things intensely, but he is very careful and subtle about expressing his emotions. I get the impression that he does not want to hurt anyone. When he and Reuven discuss the "silence" that has been imposed upon them by Danny's father, Reuven expresses his rage and hurt, while Danny stands up for his father, yet, still expresses his genuine sadness concerning their temporary separation: Danny inhibits his anger and pain.

David Malter, Reuven's father is also cautious about expressing his emotions. He is passionate about ideas and feelings that bring the world closer together--"Anything that brought the world closer together he called a blessing" (p. 52)--but if he thinks expressing his feelings might harm someone, he attempts to inhibit them. For example, on a couple of occasions, he thinks of his deceased wife and begins to break down and sob, whereupon he immediately excuses himself from the room so as not to upset his son.

Davey, too, in In the Beginning, attempts to inhibit his painful feelings when he is sick so as not to upset his father.

I realize I am talking about inhibiting feelings more than thoughts and behaviours, but I am wondering Marlene, if you could expand on this topic of inhibition and add some further clarification to the subject.

M. Well, Dabrowski certainly was at odds with the "Let it all hang-

out" society of the past 20 years, especially in the area of Psychology.

Dabrowski says simply and purely and totally and utterly that ALL is inhibition. When we asked him to expand on this he would say that the child is born, the animal is born and excitation is what the living organism is all about--unconscious excitation. That's how we stay alive initially. But then later growth is the conscious development of inhibition at the right times, controlling and guiding all of those excitations so that when one is fully conscious no energy escapes without one's notice.

That is why development of people with immense overexcitability is far more fascinating because they have so much more to inhibit. With some people there is not much excitation, and therefore, not much inhibition, and their lives are much more moderate. But for the accelerated developers, individuals who are loaded with various overexcitabilities, inhibition is a challenge. Moderation in such an individual is not at all boring--it's the balance between some very heady extremes.

D. Inhibition, then, can be seen as a transformative tool, taking an individual's unchanneled energies and transforming them into higher levels of activity and being.

M. Well, all impulsivity, all psychomotor and sensual movement is in fact egocentricity personified--I don't mean personified--I mean that is what egocentricity is--to act, you know, you just act, you are a reacting agent to the world. The world impinges on you and you react.

And if you don't have any awareness of your own reaction, then you are always just a reacting agent. You are always socially, or perhaps, biologically determined by the electrical impulses that come from your body and move you towards food, water, or whatever they move you towards. For me, the sentence that clinches it is: some people drink when they are thirsty; others drink when there's water--and there's a gap between the excitation and the expression of it.

Now, for some individuals, there is so much inhibition that by the third level they are paralyzed. Catatonics, for instance are thoroughly paralyzed. Then, how do you grow beyond being totally inhibited? Well, then you inhibit your inhibitions!

A lot of people think impulsivity and spontaneity are the same thing. Well, they're not. Impulsivity is excitation, unconscious excitation, while spontaneity is conscious and direct. It is letting go of control with control. When you are acting impulsively you have no control in the first place. Enthusiasm in an individual can be a beautiful thing but in an unconscious person it is just impulsivity. In a conscious person, however, enthusiasm becomes directed and discriminated towards a higher ideal in life, towards what one truly values in the world--then it is beautiful.

D. It sounds to me then, that inhibition is related to what Dabrowski calls the <u>Directing and Disposing Centre</u> inside oneself. The impression I get is that this DDC at higher levels is associated with one's personality ideal. Inhibition is then, one of the tools used to transform

one's excess energy creatively in a very focused manner towards higher levels of being.

M. I would say that is an excellent understanding of what is going on in the DDC. That is precisely what happens. The DDC makes certain that no amount of energy escapes from the individual without his awareness. It's like a central switchboard with calls coming in and messages being transmitted and you, the switchboard operator, are precisely aware at all times what is going on. This reflects global, multilevel awareness rather than local or unilevel awareness.

D. I'm not certain why, but the term "dynamic inaction" comes to mind right now. It seems to me that inhibition is a paradoxical statement as well. It is something that restrains movement or expression but for the higher purpose of further development and expansion of one's being. It is as though there is a narrowing or focusing of energy that is then channeled upwards to higher levels of being.

M. Right. That's precisely the process of the overexcitabilities shifting to dynamisms that we discussed previously.

D. Yes, where the dynamisms become the refined channels of information flowing from the overexcitabilities.

M. Right.

Now I would like to ask you a question that you were going to ask me concerning this constant theme of "endings and beginnings" in Potok's books. Before we consider what Dabrowski would have to say, what do you think Potok is trying to tell us?

D. I believe he is essentially trying to tell us that beginnings are hard. The outcome we envision may be a fruitful one but it is often painful and difficult to embark upon something new. What I see happening in the books that we are discussing is that all of the major characters go beyond their biological and social determinism (Dabrowski's first and second factors) to autonomously outline their own lives.

In The Chosen, Danny makes the decision to become a Psychologist and in doing this he veers off the certain path of inheriting his father's position as the future Tzaddik. He cannot tolerate the idea of being intellectually trapped and so in order to be true to himself he must take the uncertain path and make a new beginning.

Davey, in In the Beginning does the same. He takes the uncertain path in choosing to study the Bible in a scientific way and his family and friends do everything to dissuade him from making this choice. But still he must go his own way. He says to the Rebbe:

> I will go wherever the truth leads me. It is secular scholarship, Rebbe; it is not the scholarship of tradition. In secular scholarship there are no boundaries and no permanently fixed views. (p. 415)

He has a deep hunger for the truth and so he carves out his own life and makes a new beginning.

Asher Lev, as well, does not adhere to the ordinary path of a traditionally Orthodox Jewish boy when he decides to make a life out of painting things of ultimate value, rather than Jewish calendars or matzah

boxes.

All of these characters experience intense spiritual and emotional anguish as they make their new beginnings. They certainly do not choose the easy way!

There are other characters that undergo dramatic changes too. Rivkeh, for example, in My Name is Asher Lev, makes a new beginning when she decides to go to college and complete her brother's work. Max makes a new beginning after his breakdown when he becomes a watchmaker. In each character's life as well there are endings of one phase of development and beginnings of another.

For me, this all fits with Dabrowski's notion that before one can move onto a higher level of development, there has to be an ending or disintegration of an older self to make room for a newer self. Old patterns of thoughts and behaviours begin to break down and a new self emerges. This is the process of life itself: "An old cycle ending; a new cycle beginning" ...

> Death and birth without separation. Endings leading to beginnings.
>
> (In the Beginning, p. 383)

M. I do remember Dabrowski being asked once, why for some people this development to higher levels of being is tragic and disruptive and for others the path is more smooth. He replied that for some people it's like buying a new pair of shoes and wearing one of the old and one of the new. Some people put a foot in their new world and begin building

it up before they have taken their other foot off their old world. And some people just tear down their old world or wake up one morning and find it totally gone. Their old world is gone, that's an ending, and their new world is not developed yet, that's a beginning. But they are neither here nor there, so to speak. They feel lost in space--they are lost in the space between these two worlds. They are like the kind of people who learn how to swim by being thrown into the deep end of the pool.

I have heard it said that there are two types of people. There is the person that stands at point A and tries to figure out where point B is, and then jumps there. Then there is the person who stands at point A, jumps, and then, afterwards, figures out that he jumped to point B. There are the cautious and adventuresome approaches to life.

In Dabrowski's theory, depending on your developmental makeup, if you are what he calls an accelerated developer, you can find yourself waking up one morning feeling alienated in your formerly familiar world. You feel like you are lost, but in fact, your world is lost to you and you are very shaky about where you stand because you are not in your new world yet; in fact, you don't even know what it is. But once you say "no," saying no to something negative is a positive step.

Dabrowski talks about the positive partial death instinct where you put to death in yourself things that you don't like. Now, there's no such thing as positive total death instinct-suicide--that would dismiss the person trying to do the growing. But, in the process of development

you are constantly, through your inhibitions and inner psychic transformations eliminating bit by bit all the things you don't want to be there, and then taking on new behaviours, thoughts and attitudes. The reason beginnings are so difficult is because everytime you take on a new behaviour which is alien to you, it feels inauthentic. And here you are moving towards authenticity!

So, let's say you want to start a new habit which may be nothing more than getting up at seven in the morning to complete your thesis and it hasn't been your way for awhile. The first morning you get up at seven you feel like a "faker" because it's not really you; but now, it actually becomes spontaneous behaviour because the night before you spontaneously set your alarm clock and get up in the morning to work on your thesis. You are now calling yourself a "scholar" doing your thesis but the words sound funny because you are not accustomed to hearing them. However, after you've done that every morning for three months and someone says to you "What do you do with yourself?" it's easy to say, "Well, I'm doing my thesis." Oh, what does that mean? "Well, I get up every morning at seven and work on my paper. Oh, you're really a scholar then, aren't you? Well, yes, you are now, but when you started you weren't and you felt like a faker. So, the beginning of anything in a new world feels false even though it's a movement towards truth and authenticity.

D. Well, that fits for me. A lot of people claim that they want to discard self-destructive habits, and yet when it comes to the final

crunch, the old way of being is certain and familiar and the new way of being is still an unknown entity and thus very frightening. Although a particular behaviour may be painful and detrimental to one's overall development it is still, like an old, predictable, always-to-be-relied-upon friend and thus very hard to let go of. The analogy you gave about walking with one new boot on while still dragging the old one is a very apt analogy. It is difficult to walk in the Present with the Past shuffling alongside you.

M. I would now like to pose another question to you. What character in your study do you most identify with?

D. Davey. I identify most with him. Physically, I was not a pale, sickly child, but emotionally, imaginationally and intellectually I possessed a similar sensitivity and intensity. Davey experiences tremendous anxiety, fear and dread about this "accident-world" we live in. He does not want to cause people harm or be harmed by them. In my family, I also experienced a tremendous amount of fear and anxiety as a child. I always felt guilty about the unfortunate "accidents" and ill-health that seemed to plague our family as I was growing up. I had a very active fantasy world; perhaps, this was my way of shielding myself from pain. I can deeply relate to Davey's need to build a quiet world under his milky white sheets. My inner sanctuary is still a sacred place I go to now. I especially identify with Davey's emotional vulnerability and his intuitive sense about other people. Davey is a truth seeker, and so am I. I have always been interested in under-

standing something as a whole. Details interest me, but the wholeness of something, the total perspective is very important to me. Like Davey I am interested in my roots as a Jew and primarily interested in my roots as a human being. Who am I? What can I contribute to mankind? Why am I here? What is my spiritual identity? These are vitally important questions to me. And as Max repeats to Davey what his younger brother once said to him:

> ... it is as important to learn the important questions as it is the important answers. It is especially important to learn the questions to which there may not be good answers. We have to learn to live with questions ... (p. 285)

I have learned to live with questions.

M. After reading the Theory of Positive Disintegration I once wondered whether the Level I person might be comparable to the Nazi and the Level III person comparable to the Jew, who was in fact so tortured. I also wondered if this was part of our developmental experience: acting a bit like a Nazi at some point and violating other people, and then, either being put in a psychological concentration camp by society, or voluntarily by ourselves. This would be akin to the forty days in the desert, or the long dark night of the soul. Then when we emerge with our psychological brush cuts we are shaved of our self-seeking ways and our egocentricity.

Sometimes when I think artistically about development, I see the world as a big paint pot and the canvas as a person's life. Every experience you have is painted on this canvas until it gets thicker and

thicker and finally turns into a big blob. The canvas has so much paint on it now that the task from then on is to become a sculptor and sculpt out of this big blob of paint, this morass of experience, what you really want. And so, you may not know who you really are yet, but you know who you're not. This is the process of maximum development: you get rid of what isn't you, even before you know what is you, and then the final result is to discover the authentic you. And that's your life, you know. Let it stand there for the world to see. This analogy switches from painting to sculpting, but experientially, for myself, I feel that it holds some truth.

D. What you have been talking about makes me think of growing into one's personality ideal. I wonder sometimes if my concept of "personality ideal" differs from Dabrowski's intended meaning. The impression I get from Dabrowski's definition is that the Level IV to V person has a personality ideal that is very concrete, narrow and selective. From my own experience I find that the more I evolve as a human being my concept of who I am and who I want to become expands, and my definition of self becomes broader and less concrete. I am more open, less rigid and narrow. In other words, I don't really know who I am, but I feel more authentic, rich and expansive, as though I am approaching infinity. I don't really know if I am at odds with Dabrowski or whether or not I am simply making a paradoxical statement about myself. All I know is that the less concrete I am and definite about "who I ought to be" the more truly I become "who I ought

to be!"

M. I think Dabrowski would say that at the highest level you become a "concrete idealist." That means that your ideals of love and perfection and however you perceive your world view are apparent in everything you do from putting milk back into the fridge to writing your thesis. There is a sense of reverence towards all things in life.

D. Yes, there is a feeling of sacredness and deep appreciation for all that exists. In a way, when I think about it I have developed a concrete goal or "personality ideal" for myself and it is a paradoxical one. It is very focused and yet, limitless in nature. Over the past few years of my life my goal has been a spiritual one--to know God--that's ALL. It is a very single-minded goal and yet it includes ALL.

M. That's beautiful. Dr. Dabrowski would like that.

END OF SESSION TWO

REFLECTIONS

Does life imitate art? Or does art imitate life?

In many ways my life has imitated the lives of the three characters. Like Danny Saunders I have feared intellectual entrapment: I must live and work in an environment conducive to creativity and expressing myself freely. Like Asher Lev, I have felt a compulsiveness about my artistic pursuits: I want to contribute something of ultimate value to the world; I want to "paint" the truth and "balance" the world in my own way, and like David Lurie, I have been committed to the Truth, to searching for it and revealing it.

Many times during the process of writing this thesis, I experienced resistance to expressing the truth about some facet of my life. I felt blocked and could not write. My experience relates closely to that of Asher Lev's:

> And it was then that it came, though I think it had been coming for a long time and I had been choking it and hoping it would die. But it does not die. It kills you first.
>
> (My Name is Asher Lev, p. 310)

If I do not write the Truth; if I do not express my innermost self, then I run the risk of being inauthentic and killing my spirit.

Previous to embarking on this project I had no idea of the impact it would have on me. I did not realize I would be working on major themes in my life such as my Jewishness and my inability to accept peace and happiness in my life. Yet, I have a growing conviction, that

someday, even I will not be able to resist this blissful state.

Reflecting on my own struggles in writing this thesis, I am aware that my development as a human being has taken a sudden thrust forward. In my life, I have struggled to complete things and be the best person I could be. Many times I have fallen short of my expectations. The completion of this thesis has provided me with testimony to my own spiritual development. I know now that I can complete something worthwhile and in the process remain true to myself.

The different periods of disintegration that I have experienced in writing this thesis have provided me with the creative tension necessary to execute this project. In one of our meetings Dabrowski once told me that I could transform my lower level obsessions to higher levels of being by focusing on higher ideals in life. Disciplining myself to write this thesis and extracting the very best from my inner resources has promoted the development of yet another Jewish soul.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY OF HEBREW TERMS

GLOSSARY OF HEBREW TERMS

APIKOROS - Jew educated in the basic tenents of Judaism that does not necessarily remain faithful to all the beliefs and practices of the Hasidic Jew.

CHUMASH - the first five books of the Old Testament.

GOYIM - non-Jews.

HASIDIM - a passionate Orthodox Jewish sect insular and ascetic in its approach to life. Although there are different sects with different practices, most believe that their leader--the Tzaddik--carries with him the light of God.

MASHPIA - Principal of a yeshiva.

PAYOS - sidecurls worn by Hasidic men and boys.

*REBBE - Jewish spiritual leader, especially of a Hasidic sect.

RIBBONO SHEL OLOM - Master of the Universe.

TALMUD - authoritative body of Jewish law and tradition created after the Old Testament.

*TORAH - the body of divine knowledge and law found in the Jewish scriptures and traditions; the first five books of the Old Testament.

TZADDIK - leader of a Hasidic sect, considered to be a direct link to God.

*YESHIVA - a school for advanced Talmudic study.

ZIONISM - movement for the re-establishment of a Jewish state and nation.

* Above terms taken from: Webster's 3rd New International Dictionary, unabridged, Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1976.

APPENDIX B

A THEORETICAL PATTERN OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF DYNAMISMS AT EACH LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT

Page 139 has been removed due to lack of availability of copyright permission. The title of this page is: "Theory of Positive Disintegration- A Theoretical Pattern of the Distribution of Dynamisms at Each Level of Development." This is taken from the following source: Dabrowski, K., & Piechowski, M.M. Theory of Levels of Emotional Development. Volume I. New York: Dabor Science Publications, 1977.